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ESSAYS

ON THE FOLLOWING

INTERESTING SUBJECTS:

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| I. GOVERNMENT. | VI. LIBERTY & EQUALITY. |
| II. REVOLUTIONS. | VII. TAXATION. |
| III. THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION. | AND, |
| IV. KINGLY GOVERNMENT. | VIII. THE PRESENT WAR, & |
| V. PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION & REFORM. | THE STAGNATION OF |
| | CREDIT AS CONNECTED |
| | WITH IT. |
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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION.

IT is long since the inhabitants of Britain have been termed a nation of politicians. And it is one privilege, by which we are distinguished from most other nations on the face of the earth, that on political, as well as other subjects, every man is allowed to think for himself, to express, and even to publish his thoughts, without fear of danger; so long as he propagates no opinions subversive of public order and peace. But never were the minds of men so intent upon political subjects, nor so many pens employed in political discussions, as since the year 1789. The surprising revolution that then took place in France, together with certain publications, which then made their appearance in Britain, raised such a fermentation in the minds of men, more especially in the lower ranks of life, as perhaps no former period ever witnessed. Various circumstances have occurred since that time, which have served to keep up that fermentation. And, though people now find it convenient to be a little more guarded, both in their expressions and in their conduct, than they once were, the same political enthusiasm still occupies their minds; it is ready to burst forth with redoubled violence, whenever an occasion shall offer:—And who knows what occasion of that kind these critical times may produce? It is, therefore, the part of every good citizen, and of every true Christian, to contribute his endeavour to stem the torrent, of

to prevent it from taking such a direction as may overwhelm all in confusion and ruin.

It may be thought foreign to the business of a minister of the Gospel to intermeddle in political disputes; and, if these disputes are viewed in a light merely political, there may be some justice in the thought. But every political opinion must either be agreeable or disagreeable to the word of God: every political duty is enforced by the authority of God in his law: and every political crime is an act of moral depravity. Gospel ministers ought to lay before their people whatever they have received of the Lord: to inculcate every duty that God requires of them; and faithfully to warn them against every sin that he has prohibited. If, through their neglect, the people under their charge shall fall into sinful courses,—the people may perish in their iniquity; but their blood must be required at the watchmen's hands. Upon this principle, the writer of these pages holds himself fully justified in laying them before the world; more especially when he takes into consideration the following things.

He does not consider the pulpit as a proper place for either a full or a frequent discussion of political subjects. However important those duties are which we owe to one another, as members of society on earth,—the doctrines of the cross of Christ, and the concerns of an eternal world, are of more importance still. And upon these chiefly he thinks it his duty to insist on the Lord's day. Much less does he think it proper to follow their example who make public prayer a vehicle for conveying their political sentiments to their hearers. As he considers himself, when preaching the Gospel, as

the messenger of God to men; and therefore would make conscience of delivering that, and that only, which he has in commission from God:—so, in public prayer, he considers himself as the mouth of the congregation to God; and, therefore, dare express nothing to which he has not reason to think that the whole congregation will say—*Amen*. His views of the present state of public affairs are pretty well known, both to his own congregation, and to others about the place where he resides; but the grounds upon which these views are built, he has never had an opportunity fairly to state: and this he now does the more willingly, in hopes that it may be useful, not only to his own congregation, but also to the public at large.

He has the honour to belong to a body of Dissenters who have always distinguished themselves by strenuous contendings in behalf of Christian liberty and the rights of the people, as members of the church of Christ: and, he is apprehensive that some may consider the whole society as equally strenuous in behalf of what some now call the political rights of man; while he is convinced that these two sorts of rights have no connection with, or relation to one another. He has seen, with deep concern, that, by the active part which some dissenters, both in England and Scotland, have taken in the present disputes,—an odium has been brought upon the dissenting interest, in the eyes of government and its adherents, which will not be easily wiped off. By this means, he is afraid, a very strong bar is placed in the way of the Legislature's granting that indulgence to Protestant dissenters, which they seem disposed to extend to every other denomination of men. And he knows, that though the

principles of the Secession church, with relation to the civil government in this nation, have been fully laid before the world fifty years ago; and though Seceders have always given the most unequivocal proofs of their loyalty on every proper occasion;—yet there never have been wanting some who attempted to traduce them as enemies to the present government. And, at this time, there are not a few who consider all Seceders, influenced by the peculiar principles of their Society, as ringleaders of that party who avowedly set themselves to oppose the measures of government, to embarrass its motions, and to overturn it, if possible, from the foundation. The publication of these Effays will at least convince them that some Seceders are of a different mind.

To Christians, the Holy Scriptures are the supreme rule, both of faith and practice. Concerning every opinion, of whatever kind, that any man would propagate among them, and concerning every practice, to which men would instigate them, the first enquiry of Christians should be, Is it, or is it not, agreeable to the word of God? And whoever they be, that speak not according to this word, we are sufficiently warranted to conclude, that it is because there is no light in them. Few people in the lower ranks of life can be acquainted with the science of politics: nor is it to be hoped that they can understand those abstract reasonings, which may be employed in matters of that kind. But, among us, even the poor have Bibles in their hands, and have, for the most part, been taught to read them. In the Bible, the duties of every natural and civil relation are clearly and plainly pointed out: and if men, instead of gathering their principles, concerning political duty from in-

flammatory news-papers, and seditious pamphlets, written by men, whom they know not whence they are, —would calmly peruse the Scriptures, and follow the directions of the Spirit of God speaking in them, they would find it more calculated to promote their inward peace, as well as tending more to make them quiet and useful members of society. In all that has been written, on those political controversies which of late have been agitated among us, little recourse has been had to the Scriptures on either side. Hence, people may imagine, that these are matters with which the Scriptures have nothing to do: and that they may take what side they please, without acting contrary to the word of God. To obviate this mistake is one main design of this publication. On such a subject, it will be impossible to confine ourselves wholly to arguments drawn immediately from Scripture: but Scripture and sound reason were never at variance. From these two sources combined, it is proposed to collect what has occurred on the following topics.

I. On Government in general; and the Subjection due to the Powers that be.

II. On Revolutions.

III. On the British Constitution.

IV. On Kingly Government, and Hereditary Succession.

V. On Parliamentary Representation and Reform.

VI. On Liberty and Equality.

VII. On Taxation.—And,

VIII. On the present War, and the failure of Credit as connected with it.

ESSAY I.

Of GOVERNMENT in general; and the Subjection
which Christians owe to the Powers that be.

AMONG the philosophers of modern times, it has become fashionable to speak of mankind as having originally been a race of savages, little removed from brutes, and wholly unconnected with one another in society. And this savage state they call the state of nature. In such a state, every man must have united in his own person all the rights that are now possessed both by magistrates and subjects, as far as related to himself. Restrained by no human laws, he had a right to do what he pleased, without being subject to the will of another, or being accountable for what he did to any creature. Every man must have been his own lawgiver, his own judge, his own protector, and his own avenger.

But, though for argument's sake, we may suppose such a state to have existed, and though, in some places of the world, mankind have so far degenerated, as to have made near approaches to that state; yet it is plain, from the nature of things, that, in such a state, man never could subsist. The social principle is as much interwoven with our nature, as the principle of self-preservation: so that no human creature could ever subsist one day, in the exercise of his rational faculties, without desiring society, and using means to obtain it, if such

means were in his power. The law of nature, that was originally written on man's heart, and still continues to be so in some degree, expressly requires social and relative duties; and as expressly prohibits crimes against society: and, therefore, necessarily presupposes a social state.—Besides, unless we suppose all mankind perfectly free from any vicious disposition, the species could not long have subsisted, in that unsocial state. The weak would have become a prey to the strong; and the meek and peaceable—to the turbulent and unruly. Either they who were disposed to live in peace, must have associated together for their mutual defence; or the strongest individual, and the most wicked, would have made himself master of the whole race. In either of these cases, the foundation would have been laid, of some kind of society.

If we have recourse to Scripture history, the only history that can give us satisfaction in that matter, we shall find the above reasoning confirmed by fact. Adam, though in full possession of a furnished world, the very day that he was created, felt a want of something more adapted to his nature, than any thing that God had yet made. Neither did he find a help meet for him, till he was provided with a companion of his own species. Society, therefore, was formed, as soon as Eve was created: and from that day to this, men have always subsisted in society. Whether society could have subsisted without subordination, or not,—if man had continued in a state of original integrity? is a question that none can answer. But we are very sure that it cannot in our present corrupt state. Accordingly, as soon as sin entered, God put the woman under subjection to the man; when he said,

"Unto him shall be thy desire, and he shall rule over thee*." A similar expression used to Cain, intimates a kind of natural subjection of the younger to the elder, even among brothers. And thus there can be no society without subordination, and some kind of government.

What sort of government obtained among mankind in the antediluvian ages, or from the flood to the building of Babel, it is impossible to determine. It is plain, that during the last mentioned period, mankind continued united in one society; and dwelt together in one part of the earth. After the confusion of languages, they who spoke with the same tongue would naturally associate together, settle in some convenient spot of the earth, and set up among themselves that form of government, which their peculiar circumstances might point out. But we have no reason to think, that the same form was adopted every where.

Some have asserted that the first form of government was patriarchal: that every man exercised a sovereign authority in his own family: that when the father of a family died, his authority, together with his inheritance, descended to his eldest son. The son's heir succeeded, and so forward, till the family grew into a nation, and the family chieftain rose into a king. Hence, they plead for monarchy, as more congenial to nature than any other sort of government.

Others plead that the patriarchs were no kings; that they exercised no other authority than what still belongs to every head of a family: that this authority did not descend to their heirs; but that each of their sons, when they came to have families of their

• Gen. iii 16.

own, exercised the same authority in them as his father had done in his. They say that the first king was *Nimrod*, an usurper and a tyrant: that all other kingdoms were set up in the same manner. Therefore royalty is repugnant to nature: and that both name and thing ought to be banished from among men.

Both these opinions have something true in them, and something false. On the one hand, it cannot be denied that the patriarchs exercised a more extensive authority in their own houses, than any head of a family would be allowed to do under a settled government. *Abram* had his trained servants, whom he led forth to war: he formed alliances with neighbouring princes or patriarchs; for *Aner*, *Ešcol*, and *Mamre* were confederate with *Abram*: he past sentence of banishment against *Hagar* and her son: and exercised other functions of royalty, even while he sojourned in a strange land. The same thing is apparent in the history of the other patriarchs.—On the other hand, we have no evidence that this authority descended to the eldest son. Neither *Reuben*, who was *Jacob's* first-born,—nor *Joseph*, to whom he left the birth-right,—nor *Judah*, the father of the royal line,—claimed any authority over their brethren after their father's death. But *Judah*, even in his father's lifetime, exercised the highest authority in his own family; for he past sentence of death upon *Tamar* his daughter-in-law.

But, as soon as birthright, and a regular succession to property, were known,—it is very natural to suppose, that the man who succeeded to his father's estate would consider himself as succeeding also to his authority. Nor is it improbable that his claim might be sustained by the

rest of the family. If it was so in one generation, it might be so in another: and thus the succession of kingdoms, as well as of estates, might become hereditary. We have, among ourselves, an incontestible proof that this was the case in fact. All the world knows, that, till the passing of the Jurisdiction Act, an almost despotic authority was exercised, by the chiefs of our clans, over all that were considered to be of the same blood: and no sooner did a man succeed to the paternal estate, than his authority was cheerfully submitted to by the whole tribe. Even to this day, neither the progress of knowledge, nor the force of positive law, has been able totally to abolish this authority. If this was the case in Scotland, why might it not be so in other places? Whether this system is agreeable to reason or sound philosophy, or not, we shall not dispute: but, as it is founded in natural affection, it is surely consonant to human affairs. And, in fact, this seems to have been the manner in which most governments were formed in the ruder ages of society.

Of all human passions, none is more insatiable than—ambition. And, therefore, it cannot be thought improbable,—that a man under the influence of that passion, though he had no hereditary claim to dominion, when he found it in his power to subdue his neighbours, would embrace the opportunity of raising himself; and would extend his conquests as far as he could. Though Nimrod is the first on record who made himself a king in this manner, he was far from being the last. Even in modern times, *Oliver Cromwell*, *Kouli Khan*, *Hyder Ali*, and others, have risen from the lower ranks of life, and made themselves masters of powerful empires; without wait-

ing, either, for the choice or the consent of the nations whom they were to govern. The justice of such men's claims—few will assert. But it cannot be denied that such is the origin of many governments now subsisting; as well as many that have subsisted in former times.

Neither is there any doubt, that, when a number of people were, in the course of Providence, settled together, in a place where they were previously subject to no government, they would set up among themselves what form of government they thought most likely to promote the happiness of society. The same thing would happen when the former government had, by any means, been dissolved; or when a people, whether justly or unjustly, had shaken off their subjection to their former rulers. In this manner was the government of the United Provinces erected; and, more lately, that of the American States.

—But we have no reason to think that in all such cases the same form of government was fixed upon. Some nations, like the people of Israel, chose to have a king; and *monarchy* was established among them. Others, putting confidence in a few, who were considered as the most eminent for wisdom and virtue, entrusted the government in their hands; and *aristocracy* was the result. In other places, the people chose to retain the power in their own hands; and so formed a *democracy*, or republican government.—In different nations there have been different modifications of all these three; and different mixtures of two or more of them.

Indeed there are manifest traces of all these three in the earliest periods of history. Even in the days of Abraham there were kings in Egypt, in Assyria, in Persia, and in Canaan: some of them ruling over extensive

empires, and some governing one city only. Of aristocracy we have instances in the Midianites, who, though but one tribe, were governed by five kings*: and the Philistines, whose five lords once had the administration in their hands conjunctly; though afterwards one of them obtained a pre-eminence, and became their king†. And of republican government we have an instance in the Hittites, or children of Heth; as appears from this, that, before Abraham could have a burial place among them, it was necessary to hold an assembly of all that went in at the gates of the city; and the purchase of the field and cave of *Ephron* was transacted in their presence‡. Among the Gibeonites also the government seems to have been democratical; for, though they had elders, we hear nothing of their king: and all the inhabitants of their country acted, in conjunction with their elders, in sending the ambassadors to Joshua§.

In this enlightened age, few will call in question the truth of that important maxim, that *all power and authority are radically in the people*. I hope few will ever dispute it in time to come. Every people or nation has an undoubted right to choose and elect what form of government they find most convenient; and to trust the administration of it in what hands they please: and in this right every individual has his share. But from this maxim, if not rightly understood, we may draw conclusions which the premises will not bear;—conclusions which neither consist with truth, nor with the peace and well-being of society. A few of them may be pointed out.

* Numb. xxi. 3. † Judg. xvi. 1 Sam. v. 11. Compare ch. xxvii. 3.
‡ Gen. xxiii. 10. § Josh. ix. 11.

1. It does not hence follow, that all governments have actually been set up by the general voice of the people, or even with their universal consent. Though, in point of theory, the people's right cannot be denied; yet it is plain from what has been said, that, in fact, this right has seldom been exercised, or even claimed, in the erection of any government. In most nations of the world, the people never to this day dreamed that they had such a right; and how should they exercise it? Even where it has been exercised, it cannot be supposed that a whole nation was ever unanimous in their choice. Some individuals would always have preferred a different form of government, or would rather have employed other hands in the administration of it. But it would be absurd to suppose that this minority, because they did not actively concur in erecting the government, should enjoy the benefit of its protection, without being obliged to submit to its authority, or to contribute to its support.

2. It does not follow, that it is most for the benefit of society that the people should retain the exercise of that power, or any considerable part of it, in their own hands. To govern a great nation must require talents, education, and experience, beyond what usually falls to the lot of those in the lower ranks of life, in the most enlightened nation of the world. Common people may speculate about affairs of state at their fire-sides; but the weight of government is too heavy for their shoulders. Were our best country politician placed at the helm of public affairs, he would soon find himself unequal to the task. Neither would this be remedied by employing a great number of such persons in the busi-

ness: as the diversity of their opinions would add to the confusion and embarrassment. A man must serve an apprenticeship before he be qualified for any mechanical employment; and how shall one be qualified to govern nations without any instruction in the art? Is the science of politics more simple, or more easily acquired than an ordinary handicraft? Or, is it easier to manage affairs of state than to make a pair of shoes? Every man, surely, has a right to choose his own shoemaker; but will that man act wisely who shall employ one for that purpose who never knew how to *bristle a thread*? Yea, every man has a right, if he pleases, to make his own shoes; but are the rights of man violated by his wearing shoes of another man's making?—In like manner, though all power belongs radically to the people, their right is not violated by committing the actual exercise of their power into the hands of a few: and the sooner the body of the people divest themselves of that power, if it is entrusted in proper hands, the better.

3. It does not follow from this maxim, that after a particular form of government has been set up, and continued for ages, with the consent of the body of the people,—the people have a right to abolish it, and set up another, as often as they please. It has been pleaded by the friends of liberty, and no true friend of liberty will deny it, that all government is founded upon a mutual compact between rulers and people: and that such a compact, either express or implicit, subsists wherever there is a lawful government. Now, it is plain to every rational understanding, that neither party has a right to break or dissolve any contract, without the consent of the other. Hence, it has been argued with justice,

that when kings or other rulers violate that original compact, they forfeit their right to govern; the people may displace, and even punish them. The body of this nation, acting upon this principle, once declared, that their king had forfeited his crown, and the throne had become vacant. And this declaration is a standing law of our country. But, may it not be argued, with equal justice, that, if the people, or any part of them, violate the compact on their part, and refuse to fulfil their stipulations to government;—then government has a right to consider them as having forfeited its protection, and to punish them as rebels? Unless this doctrine is admitted, and reduced to practice, there can never be strength or stability in any government.

We shall be told that “rulers were made for the people, and not the people for them: that they are but servants of the public; and that every man has a right to dismiss his servants when he pleases.”—True: magistrates are servants of the state, or, if you please, of the people; and were made rulers for the people’s good. But, as the people are not slaves to their rulers, so neither are rulers slaves to the people. They serve by contract: and surely they may be allowed the rights of a common hired servant. If a servant breaks his contract, and refuses to do his master’s work according to paction, his master may doubtless turn him away: but, if he serves faithfully and honestly, according to bargain, the master who turns him away will find himself obliged, both in law and equity, to give him his wages and maintenance for the time stipulated; besides damages for breach of contract.

Our new philosophers likewise tell us, that “it is

“ absurd for one generation to choose a form of govern-
 “ ment for another, or for any generation to make laws
 “ for posterity: and therefore no succeeding generation
 “ is bound to adhere to that government which their
 “ fathers set up; nor to submit to any rulers whom
 “ themselves have not chosen.” But if this doctrine is
 once admitted, there is an end of all government, of all
 commerce, and of all society, civil and religious. Does
 not every man bind his heirs, executors, and successors,
 as well as himself, in every civil contract? And what
 confusion would ensue, if heirs and executors should re-
 fuse to fulfil such engagements? Parents, at the bap-
 tism of their children, lay their children as well as them-
 selves under solemn engagements to God, and to the
 church; and what must be the consequence to religion,
 and to religious society, if these engagements are not
 allowed to be binding? Have not public bodies the
 same right to bind posterity by their contracts as pri-
 vate persons have? Indeed they have an additional
 right to do it; because public bodies never die; but con-
 tinue the same, when all the individuals who composed
 them are changed. This is acknowledged by all man-
 kind to be the case with every paltry corporation; and
 who can deny that it is so with nations too? If any of
 the Friends of the People were possessed of a note for
 a thousand pounds, emitted by the bank of England a
 hundred years ago, and should apply to have it paid;
 would he be pleased if the directors, acting upon his
 own principles, should tell him, that they never emit-
 ted that note, that their predecessors in office had no
 power to bind them by engagements entered into before
 they were born, and therefore he should have nothing?

Have not all nations, since the beginning of the world, considered their treaties with other nations as binding upon posterity, as well as upon that generation in which they were made? Yea, did not God himself punish the people of Israel for breaking a treaty in the days of Saul that had been entered into by Joshua four hundred years before? And why should those contracts be of less force, that are entered into by the different parts of a nation with one another? Is not George III. considered, even by the Friends of the People, as bound by *Magna Charta*, though granted in the reign of King John? And why should not the people of England be as strictly bound by their engagements to the Crown, supposing them to be of as old a date?

If men could not choose a form of government, or make laws for posterity; then not only the laws, but the very constitution of every nation, behoved to be changed every day. Every day almost a thousand persons die in Britain; an equal number are born; and some hundreds, at least, come of age. He that comes of age to-day, may say:—"I never consented to the form of government now subsisting: I never had any voice in the choice of the ruling powers, or in the making of any laws. I will therefore be subject to no laws till I myself have part in the making of them: nor will I submit to any government, till I, in conjunction with my cotemporaries, have framed a constitution for ourselves."—He that comes of age to-morrow may argue in the same manner; and insist for a general convention, in which he shall have a voice, by himself or his representative, before he will submit to any government or any law

whatsoever. Surely then we shall have conventions and constitutions in great abundance!

Of all others, this argument comes with the worst grace from Seceders; and I am truly sorry ever to have heard it from any of their mouths. We consider ourselves, and the whole nation, as bound by the solemn vows that our ancestors came under to God in the National Covenant, and in the Solemn League. We consider it as our duty to mourn for the breach of those engagements, and to testify against it, as one of the most heinous of our national sins. But if our ancestors had no right to bind us by contracts or covenants with men, what right could they have to bind us by such engagements to God? Besides, I would beg my brethren's attention to this;—that, by these solemn covenants, we are as strictly bound to submit to the laws of our country, to adhere to its constitution,—and even to defend, with our lives and fortunes, the person and authority of its chief magistrate, in the execution of these laws,—as we are to any other moral duty. The express words of of the Solemn League and Covenant, Art. iii. are these: —“ We shall, with sincerity, reality, and constancy,—
 “ endeavour, with our estates and lives, to preserve the
 “ rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend
 “ the King's Majesty's person and government, in the
 “ preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms;—that the world may bear
 “ witness, with our consciences, of our loyalty; and
 “ that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish
 “ his Majesty's just power and greatness.”—If these engagements, come under by our ancestors in the days of

Charles I. are binding upon us; how can we be otherwise than bound to defend, with our estates and lives, the rights and privileges of the British parliament, the liberties of the united kingdom, and the person and authority of our sovereign George III. ?—How far our words and actions correspond to this obligation, God and our own consciences will one day determine.

Neither Scripture nor reason give an exclusive sanction to any particular form of government. Owing to the differences of national character, of situation, and pursuits, one kind of government may be proper among one people; and a different constitution may be better adapted to the circumstances of another. Thus, a mixed government has been found most congenial to the people of Britain: perhaps a republican government is more adapted to the circumstances of our brethren in America: and, from recent events, it may be suspected, that, hard as their situation was, while the king's will was their law, monarchy is the only government suited to the constitutional levity and ferocity of our neighbours in France. There have been instances of nations flourishing and happy under different forms of government. And every government is capable of degenerating into tyranny, oppression or anarchy, in the hands of a corrupt administration. Hence there is a great deal of truth in Mr. Pope's maxim,—

“That which is best administer'd is best.”

There was once a nation whose form of government was prescribed by God himself. He not only moulded their political constitution; but gave them a body of municipal laws, which none had power to abolish or to alter: for JEHOVAH their God was their King. That

law expired with the civil state of the Jews; and was never considered by Christians as binding upon any other nation, or in any other place but the land of Israel. But many of those laws might with propriety be adopted in every nation. And it is carefully to be observed, that there could be nothing in their constitution or code of laws inconsistent with moral equity or with any of the just rights of man; because the Great Judge of all the earth must necessarily do right.—It may be pleaded that many of these laws were typical; intended to point out good things to come:—and this is readily granted. But neither with this, nor with any other design, can it be supposed, that He, who is the original fountain of all reason, of all right, and of all justice,—would ever establish tyranny, oppression, or iniquity, by a law. And therefore, nothing that, by divine appointment, belonged to that constitution, can be inconsistent with the rights of the people, when adopted by any other nation.

But what is of the greatest importance to Christians is, that the Scriptures every where enjoin obedience and submission to that government under which it is our lot to live; whatever it is, or in what manner soever it was set up. And, accordingly, Christians, in all ages and in all places, have considered it as their duty to submit to the *powers that be*; to pray for them; and to obey them in all things not contrary to the word of God: *not only for peace, but also for conscience sake.*—*My son, fear thou the Lord and the king*, was a precept delivered by the Spirit of God. In it God still speaketh to us as to children: nor is it the less to be regarded because it was delivered by the mouth of a king*. In agreeableness to

* Prov. xxiv. 21.

this did the people of God conduct themselves, not only towards the princes of David's line, but likewise towards all those who swayed the sceptre among the ten tribes.— Though most of these kings were usurpers, and came to the throne by treasons, conspiracies, and massacres; and though they were all corrupt and tyrannical in their administration, in a greater or less degree;—yet the prophets *Elijah*, *Elisha*, *Hosea*, and all other worshippers of the true God, who lived in their dominions, continued to honour them, to submit to their authority, and to obey them in all things lawful:—even while they testified against their mal-administration, and reproved them sharply on that account. And when the remnant of the people were carried captive into Babylon, they submitted to the government established in that country; many of them accepted posts under it, and under the Persian monarchy which succeeded it; and they all demeaned themselves as good and peaceable subjects,—yielding a ready obedience in all things lawful, even while they absolutely refused to obey in what was contrary to their religion, or the law of their God. Instead of entering into conspiracies or associations for the subversion of that government, they voluntarily discovered such conspiracies when they came to their knowledge, and prevented their execution. In all this they only followed the direction that God himself had given them, by the pen of Jeremiah the prophet:—“Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives: and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace*.”

* Jerem. xxix. 7.

The same duty is plainly inculcated, and strongly urged, in every part of the New Testament. *Tiberius*, who possessed the imperial throne at Rome in the time of our Lord's public ministry, had no other right to it, but his being the adopted son of an usurper, and being in possession of it. He had no right to govern the Jewish people, except that of a conqueror. But *Tiberius* was acknowledged as emperor by the body of the Roman people: and the Jewish nation had submitted to his yoke, enjoyed his protection, and had his image and superscription upon their current money. On these accounts, our Lord himself enjoined his hearers to pay him tribute, and continue to submit to his authority in things lawful. This is the sense that interpreters, almost without exception, put;—indeed it is the only sense that agreeably to the common use of language, can be put, upon these remarkable words of his, *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's**.

—The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christians at Rome, exhorts them in the most pointed manner, to a peaceable subjection to Nero's government. “Let every soul
 “be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no
 “power but of God: the powers that be are ordained
 “of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power,
 “resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist
 “shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are
 “not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt
 “thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which
 “is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For
 “he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if
 “thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth

* *Matth. xxii. 21.*

“not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God,
 “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.
 “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for
 “wrath, but also for conscience sake*.”—To his beloved Timothy he writes thus, “I will that supplications,
 “prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made
 “for all men: for kings, and all that are in authority;
 “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life under
 “them, in all godliness and honesty: for this is good
 “and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour†.”

—To Titus, he points it out, as one part of that duty which he, as a minister of the Gospel, owed both to his master and to his hearers, to “Put them in mind to
 “be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work‡.”—His brother Peter speaks in the same strain. Writing to the Jewish Christians who were dispersed through various provinces of the lesser Asia, he thus speaks, “Submit
 “yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s
 “sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto
 “governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the
 “punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them
 “that do well. For so is the will of God. Honour all
 “men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour
 “the kings§.”—These passages are all so plain, that they need no commentary: they are purposely so express, as to be equally applicable to all Christians, in every age, and in every place. And from them all it is plain, that whatever form of civil government is actually set up among any people, and acknowledged by the body

* Rom. xii. 1,—5.

† 1 Tim. ii. 1,—3.

‡ Tit. iii. 1.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 13,—17.

of the nation,—all christians belonging to that nation, are bound by the authority of God, to submit to that government, and to yield obedience to all the lawful commands of those who are entrusted with the administration of it: living quiet and peaceable lives under them, in all godliness and honesty.

Conformable to this has been the practice of the faithful followers of Christ in all ages. The primitive Christians shall serve for an example. They could not but see the very great defects of the Roman government, (now changed from its ancient republican form, into a military despotism.) They knew the unworthy character of most of those who, in that period, wore the imperial purple. They testified, in their several stations, against all that conduct, whether of their rulers or fellow subjects, whereby God was openly dishonoured. They refused, at the hazard of their lives, and of what was dearer than their lives, to obey their civil superiors in things that were contrary to the divine law. And on that account they felt more of the tyranny and oppression of the ruling powers than all the other subjects of the empire together. No doubt they wished, and often prayed in secret, for a reform. But they never sought it by any seditious methods. They never formed associations among themselves, nor in conjunction with men of any other denomination, for subverting or changing the government. They had no conventions, to which they sent deputies from the different provinces, to consult about the most proper means of bringing about a revolution. Their ecclesiastical synods, which they held in the face of persecution, never employed themselves on such an object. We never so much as hear of their

taking any part in those disputes, tumults, or civil commotions, by which the empire was convulsed, at the accession of almost every new emperor. They patiently submitted to persecution and tyranny, in imitation of Him, who, *when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not*; committing themselves, as He did, to *Him that judgeth righteously*. The more cruel and unjust their civil superiors were to them,—the more dutiful were they, in their respective stations, to their superiors. Thus, by patient continuance in well doing, they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. This is the line of conduct which the Christian religion points out to all its adherents; and this they have uniformly followed; unless where obliged to stand on their defence, against those who hunted them down like wild beasts, or where a long series of intolerable oppression had driven them to desperation. It cannot be thought impertinent to say, to Christians in Britain, at the present time, *Go thou and do likewise*.

E

E S S A Y II.

Of REVOLUTIONS.

THE above reasoning, some may think, tends to establish the doctrine of passive obedience, and non-resistance: and cuts off all possibility, especially in a Christian country, of providing a remedy for any defects in an established government, or of preventing the abuse of power. By no means. That absurd, irrational, and antisciptural principle, by which the flatterers and abettors of tyranny have, in former times, attempted to destroy British liberty, and to wreath about our necks a yoke of arbitrary power;—that principle, I hope, shall never more find abettors in this nation. Though the Scriptures require subjection to the powers that be; yet this must always be understood with the following limitations.

1. Every subject, as well as every ruler, is answerable to God for every part of his conduct. The law of God is of prior obligation to any laws of men; and his authority is superior to that of an earthly magistrate.—While the powers of this world enjoin nothing inconsistent with the law of God,—that law itself requires obedience to them; and disobedience to them is rebellion against God. But, whenever the laws of men require what the law of God forbids, or forbid what it requires,—the meanest peasant needs not be ashamed to say to the greatest prince, what the two Apostles said to the

Jewish sanhedrim;—*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye**. To say, as some have done, that whatever is commanded by superiors—the sole duty of inferiors is to obey; and that, when any thing is done in this way contrary to the will of God, superiors only are answerable for it;—this is to degrade men not only into slaves or beasts of burden, but even into mere machines. If my superiors sin in commanding what is unlawful, I sin likewise in obeying them. No superior can either answer for me at the tribunal of God, or bear that punishment for me which the divine law annexes to my transgression: and it will afford me little comfort, in the day of reckoning, to find those who are now my superiors involved in the same condemnation. Not only must I obey God, at the expence of disobedience to human rulers; but I must also judge for myself,—whether I may or may not obey them, without being guilty of disobedience to Him. And my own judgment, not theirs, must regulate my conduct.

2. No man ought to be subject to the arbitrary power, or capricious will of another: but all rulers ought to govern by known and fixed laws. Laws ought not to be fixed like those of the Medes and Persians, so as never to be changed: for as, in every government, bad laws may be enacted,—so all such laws should be reversed as soon as possible. Besides, what was, at first, a good and necessary law, may, through a change of circumstances, become bad and pernicious. But they should be so fixed as that the subject may know what is required of him: and that he who executes, may not

* Acts iv. 19.

have it in his power to alter them. For it may be considered as an infallible maxim,—that wherever the legislative power and the executive are lodged precisely in the same hands, there is an end of civil liberty.

3. When any government, of what form soever it has been, degenerates into habitual tyranny; this may arise from the corruption of the people as well as of the rulers. But the people can never be relieved from the duty of allegiance, or fulfilling the compact on their part, because they grow turbulent and ungovernable.—When, instead of protecting the people, it habitually oppresses them, or suffers them to be oppressed;—and when all other means prove ineffectual to procure redress:—then, undoubtedly, the people have a right to abolish it, and set up another in its place; or they have a right to make what alterations in it they shall find expedient. The original compact being then broken, on the part of government, the people are loosed from their allegiance. And the principle of self-preservation requires that the people should resume into their own hands, that power which originally belongs to them. Hence revolutions may not only be sometimes proper, but absolutely necessary for the preservation of society.

But *when* this interference of the people becomes necessary, or *how long* they ought to bear their grievances, without coming to this extremity, may not be so easy to determine: indeed, the best writers on the subject have never attempted it. They uniformly acknowledge, that it might even be dangerous to attempt a decision of the question. The following things, relative to it, deserve consideration.—

The relation between magistrates and subjects bears a

near resemblance to that between husband and wife. Marriage and magistracy are both institutions of the law of nature: both relations are established by contract; and require the mutual consent of both parties: both impose reciprocal duties upon the relatives: and neither the one nor the other should be lightly broken through. The scriptures, and the laws of most civilized nations, have determined, that no man ought to put away his wife, except for the cause of adultery. And surely no people should think of subverting an established government, or dismissing those, in whose hands the administration is entrusted; unless for something by which the contract is as manifestly violated, as the marriage contract is by adultery; and something which renders it as impossible, that the ends of the relation should be gained by its continuance, as adultery does in the other case. If one act, or a few acts of injustice or mal-administration were to be considered as a sufficient reason for subverting the government of a nation; the best formed constitution would never be out of danger: and the world would never be without revolutions; while rulers, as well as subjects are in a state of imperfection.

Neither should a revolution be thought of, till all other habile means of obtaining redress, have been employed without success. While petitions, remonstrances, and other peaceable and constitutional methods, have any probability of succeeding; or even while a partial reform can answer the purpose, no wise man will ever think of going further. Even a reform should never be sought, in any other than a constitutional way; unless the evil complained of is of such magnitude, as to warrant risking a national convulsion, with all its dangers,

whether to the political constitution or to the safety and comforts of individuals. No man will either pull down his house, with a view to build a new one, or endanger its fall by digging under its foundations, so long as all its defects may be remedied by a few repairs.

When things come to such a pass as to make a revolution necessary, the matter will carry its own evidence. No man will need to be informed that such is the case. Every man will see;—every man will feel it. The whole nation will at once bestir themselves; and every man whose mind is not enslaved, or who does no profit by the system of oppression, will be ready to bear his part. They who are best informed will always be most forward; and they who have most to lose, knowing that they stand the fairest mark for the rapacious hand of tyranny, will always be most zealous for the breaking of its arm. Hence it is manifest, that while the majority of a nation continue satisfied with their government, and while that majority consists of those who have the best opportunity to know the real state of things, and of those who have most at stake; all attempts of a minority to subvert the government must be unwarrantable and seditious.

Under every government there will always be a number of discontented persons. Ambitious men, who thirst for power, for places, or for pensions, will always rail against that administration in which they are not allowed to bear a part; and revile those whom they envy. Impious men, who trample upon the authority of God, impugn His religion, and perhaps deny His being,—can never be expected peaceably to submit to the authority of fellow-creatures. Men who have spent their own

estates in extravagance and dissipation, and see no other way to furnish themselves with the means of continuing the same course of life,—may hope to retrieve their fortunes by raising or fomenting convulsions in the state. He whose conscience allowed him to squander what was his own, and perhaps much that was never his own, in the brothel or at the gaming table,—will feel little remorse in attempting to reimburse himself with the spoils of his country. Men addicted to those crimes, which the laws of all civilized nations must punish, will readily cry out against the laws—as unjust; and against those who execute them—as tyrannical. The thief will complain, if he cannot steal with impunity: the highwayman may think it hard that he cannot follow his calling undisturbed: and the infamous dealer in uncultured goods may grumble because smuggling is reckoned a crime. It is not to be wondered at, if even honest men complain of those burdens, which, from their peculiar circumstances, fall heavy upon themselves. The West India merchant may complain of the duties on sugar and rum: the distiller, the tallow-chandler, and others in similar circumstances, may be dissatisfied with the excise-laws:—and so on. When, among any of these classes of men, there arises a person of a turbulent spirit, yet capable of speaking or writing plausibly,—he may easily raise a fermentation in the minds of well-meaning labourers and mechanics; who, by their situation in life, have little opportunity to read, to think, or to know much, about matters of government. This he will find the more easy, if he catches the time, when an accidental scarcity of provisions, or stagnation of trade, deprives them of employment or of bread. He may tell them

that all this is owing to government; that they will never be better, while the present system continues; and that nothing but a revolution will keep them from starving.—Nor is it any wonder, if they, in the simplicity of their hearts, believe him;—and all cry out for a change. But, if we must have a revolution whenever such things as these happen, no nation on earth will be one year without them: and that government which is most friendly to liberty will always be soonest overturned; because a government really tyrannical would dispatch the man, without ceremony, and perhaps without noise, who should attempt to inflame people's minds by such writings or speeches; so that few would venture to give such umbrage: and the means of circulating discontents, or forming combinations, would be very limited.

As no wise man will begin to build a house, till he first sit down and count the cost;—so no wise people will attempt to overturn their government, till they have seriously weighed the consequences; and have, at least, a probability, that the cure will not be worse than the disease. No tyrant will submit to his deposition without resistance, if resistance is in his power. If the people should fail in their attempts to displace him, they do but rivet their own chains, and embolden him to be more tyrannical. How many instances of this does history furnish? And though they should, at last, be successful in the struggle, how much blood and treasure must be expended; and what accumulated calamities must be suffered, before the end can be gained? The Dutch provinces were not emancipated, till after a war of forty years: in which millions of lives were lost; and many millions of money. They often suffered miseries,

during the contest, that we cannot see human nature supporting without astonishment. All this, no doubt, redounded to their honour, when, at last, their lion emerged free. But would they not have been arrant fools, if they had exposed themselves to all this for no cause; or on account of some trifling inconvenience? Surely, before we bring ourselves into such a situation, we should seriously consider, whether any evils we suffer, are equal to those, to which we would expose ourselves? Or whether that which we seek after, is of such importance, as, on its account, to put in hazard at once what we enjoy and what we may suffer?

Once, indeed, a revolution was effected in Britain, and the nation scarce felt the shock. But the revolution of 1688, was obtained by what was justly termed "the *swing* of the whole people," and even it was not so cheaply purchased as some may apprehend. So that, if the matter is attentively considered, that instance will not encourage us rashly to venture upon another such attempt. From the time that the Stewart family ascended the throne of England, a scheme was laid to subject both kingdoms to a yoke of arbitrary power. During the life of James,—partly by his king-craft, and partly by the real insignificance of his character,—the nation was prevented from being much alarmed. When they were roused, in the days of his son, what a deluge of blood was spilt; and what convulsions did the three kingdoms suffer, before the affair was settled? At the restoration of the second Charles, the nation, in a frenzy of loyalty, arising from their being heartily weary of usurpation and anarchy,—gave away, in one day, all that they had gained by a successful war

of ten years. The consequence was, that the same arbitrary system was resumed: and human nature recoils at the recital of the fines, imprisonments, forfeitures, banishments, tortures, executions, and murders, that disgraced the reigns of the bloody brothers. Now, the revolution of 1688, was really purchased at the expence of all that the nation suffered, in the struggle against the despotism of that family, and under Cromwell's usurpation, during fifty years before. For what was effected by the revolution, was the very thing that was aimed at by the Scottish nation, when they first took up arms against Charles I. and by the parliament of England, till Cromwell turned them into a rump.

After all, the person must either be blinded with infidelity, or utterly unacquainted with the history of that time, who does not see, that the success of that attempt was more owing to a manifest interposal of the hand of God, than to all the activity of men. Had not the tyrant been so infatuated, that he gave no credit to all the information he received of the Prince's design, till he saw it put in execution, and then, in opposition to what had been his known character, deserted his throne, his capital, and his kingdom, in such a cowardly manner, soon after the landing of his son-in-law;—the Revolution had not been so easily brought about. Had he been permitted to consult his friends, concert his measures, collect his forces, and use such means to repel the invasion, as any man would have used, whom God had not appointed to destruction;—the attempt of the prince of Orange might possibly have issued in the same manner as that of the Duke of Monmouth and the Earl of Argyle had done some time before. Had he made such

resistance in England as his friends made for him in Scotland, or as himself afterwards made in Ireland; who can tell what it might have cost the nation, before they had got rid of his despotic system?

Neither ought it to be forgotten, that it is always dangerous for the common people to interfere, in matters of this kind. I mean nothing dishonourable to the common people. I count it no disgrace that I am one of them, or that my father was so before me. But how can it be supposed, that men, who have spent their lives at the plough, at the loom, or at the needle; whose time has been occupied in providing, by the labour of their hands, a subsistence for themselves and their families; and who can scarcely find leisure to read their Bibles, and to think about the weighty concerns of an approaching eternity,—that such men should be qualified to erect forms of government, or to manage the affairs of a great nation? As soon should I expect to hear a man explain all the phenomena of nature, who never knew the first principles of mathematics.—When the multitude are once roused into fury, they know not where to stop: and, therefore, after overturning the existing constitution, they could scarcely fail to introduce such violence, anarchy and confusion, as would prove far more intolerable than the worst sort of government.

Our ancestors were aware of this, in the period above referred to. It was not by forming societies or associations among the common people, that *our* Revolution was brought about. It was not by holding conventions, in which journeymen tailors, barbers, and stocking-makers, sat as deputies chosen by their brethren,—called themselves Friends of the People, and consulted toge-

ther for the good of the nation. The wisest men in the three kingdoms,—the men who, by their rank in life, had the best opportunities of acquiring political knowledge, and the greatest degree of influence in the country, laid their plans among themselves, and concerted measures with the prince of Orange, without the privity of those in the lower ranks of life. The common people, though they rejoiced at the event, were as much surprised when they saw it, as the king himself. And it deserves peculiar attention, that all this was the result of a conviction, that a government merely republican could not subsist in Britain: and that it was peculiarly dangerous, to allow the common people to interfere, in the management of public affairs. To this purpose, I beg leave to transcribe a passage from a foreign writer of reputation, on this subject. “The royal power being thus annihilated,” [by the death of Charles I.] “the English made fruitless attempts to substitute a republican government in its stead. Subjected at first, to the power of the principal leaders in the long parliament, they saw that power expire, only to pass, without bounds, into the hands of a protector. They saw it afterwards parcelled out among the chiefs of different bodies of troops; and thus shifting without end, from one kind of subjection to another, they were at length convinced, that an attempt to establish liberty in a great nation, by making the people interfere, in the common business of government, is of all attempts the most chimerical; that the authority of all, with which men are amused, is in reality, no more than the authority of a few powerful individuals who divide the republic among themselves;

“and they rested, at last, in the bosom of the only
 “constitution, which is fit for a great state, and a
 “free people; I mean that in which a chosen number
 “deliberate, and a single hand executes*.”

All the above observations are mournfully confirmed and illustrated, by the recent example of our neighbours in France. Their first national assembly, in the year 1789, was convened with some measure of agreeableness to their ancient constitution, which had been suspended for ages. Many of them were men of rank, of property, of learning, and political knowledge. Had they been left to the free exercise of their own judgments, there is no doubt that they would have given to their country a constitution, which might have proved the glory of France, and a pattern to other nations. But unfortunately, there were among them, a party of factious and designing men, who formed connections with the populace of Versailles and Paris. And soon, very soon, those beginnings which had given pleasure to every friend of liberty, and of mankind; gave place to the most gloomy and disastrous appearances. At first the common people took no active part, otherwise than in choosing their representatives; but no sooner did the events of the 14th of July 1789, show that popular favour might be the road to power, than the *Sans Culottes* began to think themselves capable to manage the affairs of the nation. From that time, the exclamations of the galleries dictated the resolutions of the

* See De Lolme on the English constitution p. 53.—A book which I would earnestly recommend, to be perused by every person in Britain, before he put his hand to any attempt to change the government of his country.

Assembly: which was then deserted by its most virtuous members. The king was carried a prisoner to Paris, where he remained in the power of an organized mob. By this means, a constitution was adopted, which, though professedly designed to have been a limited monarchy, yet actually gave an opportunity to those who courted the populace, and knew how to flatter their passions, to become the despots of the nation. The second National Assembly was still more under popular influence; and the Convention most of all. From the time of their meeting, all matters were carried by the votes of the Jacobin Club, or by the sovereign mob of Paris. Then every thing went into confusion. Revolutions followed upon the back of revolutions. Five hundred tyrants started up instead of one. More blood has been shed by their republican despots, in the short space of eighteen months, since the fatal 10th of August, 1792, than has been shed by all their kings together, (if we except the massacre of St. Bartholomew, which was the work of a faction, more properly than of a king,) since the days of Charles the Great. And now liberty, property, morality, and religion, are all annihilated at once: and France is become *an execration, and a hissing, and a curse, among all nations.*

Perhaps it may be thought unnecessary to apply the above reasoning to ourselves in Britain; because, for some months back, no one pretends to wish for a revolution. *Reform* being now the word, in the mouth of all our mal-contents. But, however they may now speak, every man, who had his ears open a year ago, knows that nothing less was then talked of, than such a total revolution as would bring us into the same situation

with our neighbours beyond the channel. Our king was to be dismissed, as a piece of useless and expensive lumber; our parliament was to be turned into a convention; and our Friends of the People were to be what the Jacobins are in France. Though they find themselves obliged to change their dialect, because Government begin to punish some ring-leaders of sedition, their views are by no means changed. They now seek a reform, only because they think it would be one step towards a revolution.

But will any of the most disaffected among us say, that we have any such occasion for a revolution, as they had in France six years ago; or as our fathers had in Britain a hundred years before? We have no *Lettres de cachet*, by which a man may be seized, when going about his lawful business, or even in his own house, carried he knows not where, and kept during the pleasure of a whore or a parasite, without ever knowing whom he had offended, or how. We have no *Bastilles*, in which an innocent person may be forced to spend his whole life in a dungeon, without trial, without appeal, and even without allowance to prefer a petition for justice. No man's will is our law. Neither the king himself, nor any of his ministers dare touch a hair of our head, nor a farthing of our property, unless in execution of the law. Our parliament cannot be forced to register oppressive edicts issued, or oppressive taxes imposed, by arbitrary power: nor dare any tyrant banish, imprison, or otherwise violate our parliament or its members, if they should refuse to do so. All this was but a small part of what the French people were liable to, before the year 1788.—Neither will any man

say, that our king or his ministers have ever attempted to make, abolish, or suspend laws, by the mere force of prerogative,—to levy taxes without the authority of parliament,—to keep up standing armies, in time of peace, without their concurrence,—to subject to fines, imprisonment, or military execution without trial, by respectable juries,—to authorize his military officers to put innocent men to death, without ever bringing them before a civil magistrate, to pack or corrupt juries, to instruct judges how they should proceed, or what sentence they should pass, in causes that might come before them,—to rob corporations of their charters, or to displace their magistrates, who had been regularly chosen, and appoint others in their room, by mere court authority. Yet these are but a few of those tyrannical measures, by which the last James forfeited his right to the crown.—Unless we have grievances to complain of, of equal magnitude with these, we can have no such occasion for a revolution as our fathers had.

ESSAY III.

Of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

THAT we may know what occasion we have for a change, it will be necessary to consider what is the footing upon which we stand.—That Britain had a constitution, and one of the best that any nation was ever blest with, has not only been the boast of British subjects, but the unanimous verdict of all foreigners of reputation, till very lately. A principal reason why our fathers turned off king James was, that he had violated the constitution of the kingdom. From that time, till within two years past, every man who thought it his interest to rail against Government had it still as the burden of his ditty, that the measures of administration were inconsistent with the constitution. To arraign the constitution, itself, the most turbulent durst not venture: much less had any man sufficient confidence to tell us that we had no constitution at all. This honour was reserved for *Thomas Paine*: and, to the astonishment of mankind, he was believed, and his assertion retailed, by the very men whose cry had been, *the Constitution! the Constitution!* for many years before. And all the proof adduced for this new doctrine is, that our constitution is not written down in a pamphlet, and sold for a shilling, like that of France, or theirs in America! But, in spite of Mr. Paine, and all his new colleagues, the world knows that Britain has a constitution, which we fondly

hope their hundred thousand invaders, though joined by all their friends and well-wishers among ourselves, shall not be able to shake. It consists of a system of laws, by which the people of Great Britain have agreed to be governed. It comprehends the common law, which, though it was never written, is as well known, and much better established, than any printed constitution, either in France or America. It is explained and extended in various acts of parliament. It is summed up in *Magna Charta*, and in the *Bill of Rights*. It is impressed on the mind and heart of every loyal subject in Britain: never to be erased, by any efforts, either of tyranny or sedition.

Any full delineation of the British constitution cannot be expected in a publication of this nature. Nor does the writer of these Essays pretend to be qualified for it. All that is here intended, is only to mention a few obvious advantages that it possesses, and which would be in danger of being lost, if any change should take place in it.

Every man knows, that in Britain, the legislative authority, or the power of making laws, is lodged in the three Estates, KING, LORDS, and COMMONS. But all the three have not the same powers, in this respect. The King can propose no laws, nor bring any bill into either house of parliament, except for the reversals of attainder. Nay, if any person, while a bill was under consideration, should but insinuate how the king would wish the debate to issue, it would be considered as a breach of privilege: and the bill would be rejected. The king's judgment is never asked, nor can it be given, concerning any law, till it has past both

Houses. And thus, all his concern in the legislation is reduced to a mere negative. Another difference is, that all money-bills must not only originate in the House of Commons; but must receive all its form in that House. Even the smallest alteration made in it by the Lords, would cause the whole to be set aside; though it went only to rectify a grammatical mistake. Thus, in regard to all taxes, or burdens that can be laid upon the people, the power of the Lords is also reduced to a negative. The people of Britain can only be taxed by their own representatives. No law can pass, or become binding upon the subject, till it has a majority for it, first in one House, and then in the other; and, last of all, it must receive the royal assent.

To balance the power of the House of Commons, in relation to money-bills, the House of Lords is the supreme court of judicature in the nation. They receive appeals, in civil causes, from all inferior courts; and give a final decision. All Peers, accused of any crime, must be tried by them: and likewise all Commoners, who are impeached, by the other House.

The executive power is lodged solely in the King. From the moment that a law is enacted, neither House of Parliament has any thing to do with it. Every member of both Houses is as much subject to it, as any other person in the kingdom: and it will be executed with the same impartiality upon them, as upon any other person. Yea, the King himself is not above the law, though it belongs to him to put it in execution. It is, indeed, a maxim in our law, that *the King can do no wrong*; that is, if any thing contrary to law is done by the King, or by any in his name, the King in person cannot be call-

ed to account or punished for it. But the minister, to whose department it belongs, is accountable for it, and is liable to punishment, because he did not prevent it. Thus Britain has one happiness, beyond almost any other nation in the world, that no law can be binding upon any subject, that is not equally binding upon every person concerned in the making of it. And, therefore, our legislators would hurt themselves, as much as any other person, by enacting laws that were really bad.

It has been justly observed, that, under this mixed constitution, we enjoy all the advantages of all the three sorts of government, *Monarchy*, *Aristocracy*, and *Democracy*, without being subject to the inconveniences of any of them. The nation is not subjected to the will of one man, who is himself subject to no rule but his own caprice, either in making laws or in the execution of them, or in his private conduct towards individuals: and yet our government has all the strength and energy of monarchy. It has likewise all the wisdom of aristocracy, without subjecting the body of the people to a junto of men, who, considering themselves as of a superior species, and having an interest opposite to that of the Commons, might always be expected to consult their own advantage at the expence of the people. In the mean time, the Commons have sufficient influence in the government, to prevent their ever being oppressed by the other two estates, or by either of them; while we are secured against those tumults and convulsions, and likewise against that dilatoriness, and that unsteadiness of councils, that must always attend a mere republican, or democratic government.

Thus each of the three branches of the legislature,

forms an effectual check upon the other two. If any bill should pass in the Upper House, prejudicial to the interest of the people, it may be rejected in the Lower House. If by reason of a temporary enthusiasm, or otherwise any thing should pass in the House of Commons, prejudicial to the rights of the crown, of the peers, or of the nation at large,—the House of Lords would probably throw it out. And if any thing should pass both houses, tending to abridge the royal prerogative, or to lay such a restraint upon administration, as would prevent the regular execution of the laws, or lay the nation open to the insults of a foreign enemy,—still it may be prevented from passing into a law, by the king's with-holding his assent: for, though this branch of the royal prerogative has never been exercised, since the accession of the present family, no person doubts its existence.

The House of Lords has, by some who affect popularity, been considered as a grievance. But, instead of being so, it is both the ornament and the bulwark of the constitution. On the one hand, it has always been, by the interposition of the peers, or greater barons, that the power of the crown has been restrained, when a prince of an arbitrary disposition was in danger of enslaving the people; as in the days of King John, of Henry III. and others. On the other hand, as often as the Commons have attempted to encroach upon the royal prerogative, and subject the crown to their will, the Lords have interposed to prevent it. One remarkable instance of this took place in the beginning of the present century: when the Commons, by the expedient of tackling any favourite measure, which they found disagreea-

ble to the crown, to a money-bill, thought to oblige the King to pass what laws they pleased,—the Peers effectually defeated that dangerous scheme, by making it a standing rule of their house, never to pass any bill of another nature, that is tacked to a money-bill. When the long parliament abolished the House of Peers, the natural consequence was, first the total abolition of royalty, and then the destruction of the power of the Commons, and the rights of the people,—and the subjection of the whole nation to the despotism of an usurper. —If ever another attempt should be made to exclude that house from its share in the legislative authority, similar consequences must needs follow.

That the Lords and the Commons sit and vote in two separate houses, is another peculiar advantage of the British constitution. Were they to sit in the same assembly, and to carry all things by a majority of votes, either the one class or the other would necessarily predominate. If the Lords could maintain such an influence, as to bring over to their party as many of the Commons, as, along with themselves, might constitute a majority of the whole, then the rights of the people would be trampled upon, and themselves reduced to slavery. On the other hand; if the Commons, by virtue of their numbers, should carry all their own way, then the privileges of the nobility would soon be lost. They would no longer hold the balance between the crown and the people: and, through the continual struggle between liberty and prerogative, the one or the other must gradually sink; so that our government must soon degenerate either into despotism or anarchy. Some of the best politicians consider the uniting of the nobi-

lity with the third estate, into one assembly, as the first step towards that state of confusion, in which our neighbours in France are now involved. And similar consequences must ensue, if ever such an union should be attempted among us. The safety of British liberty depends upon each of the two houses retaining their negative over the other; and the crown's having a negative over both.

For although it would be ruinous to liberty, if the executive power were precisely in the same hands with the legislative; yet it is a very great advantage, that the king, to whom the execution of the laws is entrusted, should be one branch of the legislature, and have a negative upon the whole. If this were not the case, he might be obliged to act against his judgment and conscience, in executing laws which he could not approve: Hence, not only would he be a slave upon the throne; but occasion would likewise be given to such remissness and partiality in the execution of the laws, as, in process of time, must enfeeble the constitution. On the other hand, if the executive power were in the hands of the whole legislative body, there would be none to call them to account for mal-administration: They might not only make what laws they pleased; they might likewise execute the laws, or suffer them to lie dormant, just as it should suit their own interest or ambition. With us, as soon as a law is past, they who compose the two Houses of Parliament have no more to do with it than any other subject. The execution of it passes into other hands. And they who are to execute it, must be answerable to them who made it, if its execution be neglected or perverted;

while they who made it are as much subject to its operation as any other persons in the kingdom.

This suggests another peculiar advantage of our constitution: that as all ranks of persons enjoy the rights of free men; our legislators can never have any interest in oppressing their inferiors; but every law that is detrimental to them, must prove hurtful also to themselves. Most members of both Houses of Parliament, are men of landed property. It can never be their interest to oppress their tenants and dependants; because they would thereby disable them for paying their rents, and so diminish the value of their own estates. Thus the people employed in agriculture are safe from any fear of oppressive laws, unless the majority of both Houses of Parliament should become so infatuated as to ruin themselves, with a view to ruin their country. They who are employed in manufactures, and in trade, have an equal security, though it may not be so readily perceived, at first view. It is plain that the increasing number of trading and manufacturing people must increase the consumpt of provisions; this increases the demand for the fruits of the earth, and, of course, advances the price; and this again advances the value of land. Accordingly, the rent of land is advanced, in most parts of Scotland, one half, or more, since our trade and manufactures began to flourish. And notwithstanding this, land that sold at twenty years purchase, not many years ago, now sells at thirty, forty, and even fifty years purchase of the present rent. This may be partly owing to improvements in agriculture; but that it is likewise owing, in a great measure, to trade and manufactures, is plain from this circumstance, that

this rise in the value of land is most remarkable, in those places, where these are most attended to. Besides, it is plain, that, by means of these, the luxuries of life can be enjoyed by all ranks of persons, at a much easier rate, than they otherwise would be. We can surely wear silks and cottons, manufactured at Manchester, Glasgow, and Paisley, much cheaper than when they were all imported from Spain or the East-Indies. Now, can any man suppose, that our legislators will be so blind to their own interest, as to deprive themselves of all these advantages, by willingly crushing trade, or cramping manufactures? It is true, that many of them are but little acquainted with these matters: hence trade has sometimes been hurt by those laws which were intended to promote it. But we are every day in less danger from this quarter. A good number of persons have seats in Parliament who are as deeply engaged, both in manufactures and in trade, as any others in the nation. And this will be more and more the case, as trade and manufactures are extended. Much attention will be paid to their judgment, in framing laws relative to these matters: and whenever any law of that kind is found, by experience, to be hurtful, there can be no reason to doubt but it will be repealed.

In other countries, where there is a hereditary monarchy, and a hereditary nobility,—the nobility have an interest in taking part with the crown to oppress the people. But, with us, it is the interest of the peerage to protect the people from oppression: and, accordingly, whenever the liberties of the people have been in real danger, the nobility have ever been as active for the preservation of them as the people themselves could

be.—This is owing to the very great difference between the state of the British peerage and that of the nobility in other countries. In France, for instance, their nobility amounted to *fifty thousand*. They enjoyed exemption from all taxes and public burdens, except a very inconsiderable share of the land-tax. They held the common people in all the bondage of feudal vassallage; and disdained to intermix with them by marriage, or by engaging in any kind of trade. They treated the common people as if they had belonged to an inferior species of beings. All the descendents of the nobility were nobles: they formed a nation within a nation: and their interests were directly opposite to those of the rest of mankind.—The same is the case in Spain, with this difference, that their *Hidalgos* are still more numerous, and their contempt of the people more supercilious. In most other nations of Europe it is little otherwise. But, with us, all the nobility, including the Scottish peers, do not amount to six hundred. They are subject to all taxes, and contribute to the expences of the state as the commons do. As individuals, they have no jurisdiction over the meanest of the people. They not only intermarry with the commons; but their children sink into commoners, and mingle with the crowd. Many of them betake themselves to trade, to agriculture, and even to manufactures. The eldest son only enjoys the peerage; and even he is a commoner during his father's life. Thus, as they derive their honour from the king; and, to preserve their own lustre, must support that of the Crown:—so their interest is the same with that of the people; and, for the sake of their own families, they must watch over the people's rights: because any encroachment upon them would af-

fect their own children as much as those in the lowest ranks of life.

But, if ever the nobility should find, or think it their *interest*, to oppress the people; they cannot have it in their *power*, while our constitution remains. One branch of the legislature is always chosen by the people: and it must be the fault of their electors if the members of the House of Commons are not men of abilities and of integrity; for surely a competent number of such men may still be found in Britain, degenerate as the times are. If any law, prejudicial to the people, should pass in the House of Peers, even though it were supported by the whole influence of the Crown,—the Commons have power to reject it. Every attentive person must have observed, that, since the Revolution, the House of Commons is the most powerful branch of our legislature: and long may they continue to be so! for, while that is the case, the people of Great Britain can never be oppressed; unless they are betrayed by their own chosen representatives.

Passing many other advantages of a political nature, which I do not consider myself as qualified fully to discuss; one thing that should recommend our constitution, in a peculiar manner, to dissenters of every denomination, is, that its genius is more tolerant, and more favourable to religious liberty, than that of most other nations. I know that some penal laws, on account of religion, are still in force; and others are only suspended. Were administration rigorous in the execution of existing laws, *we* might be still exposed to considerable hardships. But we all know and feel that we enjoy a degree of religious liberty, which our fathers would have purchased at a

great expence, and to which our brethren in other countries are absolute strangers. We are allowed to worship God according to the dictates of conscience: and no man is punished for maintaining, nor even for propagating his religious opinions, if they are not destructive of the public peace. We are subjected to no additional taxes, nor to any positive inconvenience, beyond our brethren who adhere to the religious establishment. We enjoy the same protection, in our persons, our property, and our civil liberty, as they do. Even in our religious assemblies no man is suffered to disturb or offer us any violence. We labour, indeed, under some legal incapacities, which, to a few ambitious persons among us, may seem hard: but how trifling are these in comparison of the privileges we enjoy! And even from these we might have hoped soon to be relieved; had not some among us, by taking part in the measures of sedition, given occasion for government to consider us all as turbulent and factious men. I hope they may still be undeceived: and, if dissenters will but shew themselves good subjects, the tolerant genius of our constitution will gradually operate towards placing us upon an equal footing with our fellow-subjects in all political respects*.——It also deserves the particular confi-

* It may be thought strange that this tolerant genius of the constitution should be mentioned as an advantage by a Seceder; seeing, in our testimony, we mention it as a particular grievance, that, in the year 1712, an almost boundless toleration was granted, &c. ! But any person who will give himself the trouble to read that article of our testimony will see, that our reasons for finding fault with that toleration were;—its tendency “to weaken the government and discipline of the church; and its being intended to strengthen and support a party” who had openly espoused the interest of a Popish Pretender,—and

deration of the friends of divine revelation, that our constitution bears a nearer resemblance than any other on earth to that of the Jewish nation, which was framed by God himself. They had their kings, as we have; and their monarchy, like ours, was hereditary, in David's family. Their government, likewise, had its aristocratic branch, in the sanhedrim, or great council of seventy-two. And that there was something democratic in their constitution is plain; from those assemblies of the people that were held about the affair of the Levite's concubine,—about the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusa-

“ whose meetings were seminaries of disaffection to our sovereign King George, and the Protestant succession.” On the same grounds it was reprobated by the commission of the General Assembly, as appears by their address to the Queen that year. Besides, that toleration might justly be found fault with: as containing a bare suspension of the penal laws in certain cases; and as proceeding upon the supposition that the civil powers have a right to punish men for their religious principles.—They who, either formerly or more lately, have attempted to render Seceders obnoxious to government, as an intolerant sect, sworn to *extirpate* with fire and sword all who differ from them in their religious principles;—must have little acquaintance either with Seceders or their principles. They have the honour to be the first society who have set the doctrine of toleration upon its proper foundation, in the essential difference between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world.—Our opinion is, that all members of the church of Christ should exert themselves, in their respective stations, to extirpate all false doctrines, and all sinful practices, by a proper use of the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. But, that heretics, or the professors of a false religion, while peaceable members of civil society, are to be extirpated by penal laws, and by civil pains and punishments;—is a doctrine that we abhor. The office of civil magistrates being founded in the law of nature,—they can have no right to interpose their authority in matters of pure revelation; or to punish any person for having views different from their own, in such matters.

lem,—about Rehoboam's succession; and on other similar occasions. Thus it is manifest that the Jewish constitution was a mixed monarchy, as ours is. Their kings, though they had no legislative authority,—their laws being given by God himself,—yet had more power than our kings have, as might be made to appear in various instances. And their popular assemblies only met occasionally: whereas our Parliament must meet every year, or else the whole business of government must stand still. In these, and some other respects, our government is even more favourable to the people than theirs was: and yet it would amount to blasphemy to say, that their form of government, planned by Divine Wisdom and Goodness, was subversive of true liberty, or of any of the common or unalienable rights of men.

Whatever other men think or say about the British constitution, Seceders, I trust, will reflect, that it has undergone no change to the worse, since their principles concerning it were clearly stated, and laid before the world, in the *Declaration and Defence*, subjoined to the *Associate Presbytery's* answers to Mr. Nairn. We have always borne testimony against some things in the united constitution of the two kingdoms: particularly against its incorporating the church with the state; making the kingdom of Christ an appendage of the kingdoms of this world; against the absurdity of establishing one mode of religion in England, and another in Scotland: and against allowing a temporal lordship, and a place in the legislature, to the English bishops as office-bearers of the church; contrary to the express command of Christ*. Against these, and other evils of a similar nature, both

* Luke xxii. 25.

In the constitution and administration, relative to the church and religion, our testimony has never given offence to government.

This strengthens our obligation to adhere, with equal firmness, to our declared principles, relative to the civil part of our constitution; as contained in the pamphlet above referred to, where, "the presbytery affirms, that "we ought to acknowledge the present civil authority "over these nations, and subjection thereunto, in lawful commands." This is the principle, in defence of which the whole book is composed. In an act of presbytery subjoined to it, they thus express themselves: "The presbytery do hereby condemn the dangerous extreme of impugning the present civil authority over "these nations, and subjection thereunto in lawful "commands, as contrary to the plain tenor of scripture, "and to the known principles of this church in her "confession and covenants, and of all other reformed "churches;" as well as "the dangerous extreme of espousing principles in favours of propagating religion "by offensive arms; contrary to that disposition which "ought to be in all the followers of Christ, who came "not to destroy mens lives, but to save them." Perhaps it may be pleaded, that as this act of presbytery was never a term of Christian communion among us, private persons in our communion are not bound to adhere to it. But surely their acceding to our communion implies such an acquiescence in all our known principles, as not to disturb the peace of the church by a public opposition to them. And, if this argument have any weight, with regard to private Christians, it cannot apply to office-bearers; for every minister among us, and

every elder, publicly and solemnly declares, that he is
 "fatisfied with, and purposes to adhere unto and main-
 "tain the principles about the present civil government,
 "which are declared and maintained in" the above
 mentioned pamphlet*.

The associate synod is still more explicit in their ap-
 probation of the political constitution of Great Britain,
 in an act passed by them, on occasion of the accession of
 his present Majesty, on the 16th of April 1761, in which
 they express themselves thus, "The synod do hereby a-
 "gree in declaring, that they can yield to none of their
 "fellow-subjects in prizing the civil government under
 "which they live, as the best modelled government
 "throughout the known world; in respect to the me-
 "mory of our late sovereign King George II. as one of
 "the best of kings, of the mildest administration, who
 "ruled over us as the common father of his people; in
 "thankfulness for the peaceable accession of our present
 "sovereign King George III. to the throne of these
 "kingdoms; in a firm resolution to support and live
 "dutifully under his government, in our several stations
 "and capacities, according to the word of God, and
 "our received and known principles founded thereon,
 "to which we are bound by solemn covenant; in an
 "inviolable attachment to the Protestant succession, in
 "the illustrious family of Hanover; and in a full pur-
 "pose still to maintain these principles among the peo-
 "ple under their inspection."

Upon these principles Seceders have hitherto con-
 ducted themselves. It is well known, that when an at-
 tack was made upon the constitution, by the Pretender

* See Formula, Q. 11th.

and his adherents, in 1745, Seceders, ministers, and people, to a man, were stedfast in their adherence to it: and many of them took arms in its defence. I trust the body of them, whatever may be the case with individuals, will be as ready to defend it against the rage of popular clamour as against the antiquated claims of hereditary right.

But it shall be left to themselves to determine, how far those men act like Seceders, or in agreeableness to the principles above expressed, who encourage or join themselves to societies and associations, under whatever specious names, erected and maintained for the purpose of opposing the measures of government, and even of subverting the constitution. I know this intention is now denied; because they dare no longer avow it. But what else could be their design? What else can it be to this day? Why did they send addresses of congratulation to the French convention? Why did they exert themselves to propagate books, in which our constitution was held up to ridicule, and the existence of it denied? Why did they erect conventions among us, upon the plan of that of France; send deputies to them from their different departments; and there, in defiance of the constitution, take upon them to transact the business of the nation? That there was a design among those, who very falsely call themselves *the Friends of the People*, to subvert the constitution, and to change the whole form of the government, is so plain, that no disinterested person has any doubt of it. Nor was it ever denied, unless by those who were themselves concerned in it; and wished to amuse government, or lull them asleep by such denials, till their scheme should be ripe for execution.

E S S A Y IV.

ON KINGLY GOVERNMENT, and Hereditary
Succession.

ONE principal objection against the British constitution is, that we are governed by a king: whereas we are now taught that all kings are tyrants; and that under a monarchical government, however limited, no people can be free. This assertion could only proceed from a man, who feeling in himself that pride, cruelty, and malignity, which would render him a tyrant if he had power in his hands; and concluding that all men are like himself, takes it for granted, that no man can enjoy power without abusing it. But the assertion has been contradicted by the experience of four thousand years. Will any person believe, that David and Solomon, Aſa and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, were all tyrants? Were Numa and Ancus Martius tyrants, Vespasian and Titus, Trajan and Antoninus? Many princes of later times might be mentioned, whom slander itself never accused of tyranny, such as Gustavus Erickson of Sweden, and his grandson Gustavas Adolphus, Henry IV. of France, James I. of Scotland, and many more. Kings are men of like passions with others: and therefore it is not to be wondered at, if there have been fewer good kings than bad ones in the world; because, in all stations of life, there are more bad than good men. And the proportion of bad men,

who have been kings, is not greater than of those who have been cobblers. What tyrant has occupied the throne of Britain, since the Revolution? Or what one act of tyranny can malice itself impute to our present gracious sovereign?

“ But kings,” they tell us, “ are destroyers of mankind. They have been the authors of all the wars that have laid the world desolate: and peace will never be enjoyed, till kings be exterminated.” This assertion, if true, would go far to end the contest. But, unhappily no assertion can be more false. It is true, that the wars in which kings have been engaged, are more numerous than those which have been managed by republics; because the number of kings in the world has always surpassed the number of republics, at least in the proportion of ten to one. But republics have, in all ages, been more inclined to war than kings, almost in the same proportion. Was not Athens a republic, which not only maintained a constant war for ages together, against neighbouring kings, but had well nigh enslaved all the other states of Greece, till Sparta, with her two kings, rose up to oppose her? Was not Carthage a republic? And did not she extend her conquests, almost as far as her trade; so as to be, at one time, in possession of a great part of Africa, of Spain, of Sicily and of Sardinia, besides other places? Were there ever any wars more bloody, more obstinate, or more destructive, than those which she waged with Rome, her sister republic? Did ever any kingdom on earth engage in as many wars as Rome did without any provocation? Was not this the beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, having great iron teeth,

which devoured the whole earth, brake it in pieces, and stamped it with its feet*? To descend to later times, did not the Venetian republic, in a short time, raise itself, by war, from a fishing village, to be a powerful state. And, if it were not a disgrace to all other republics to reckon France among the number, has not France, since her convention called her a republic, shewed as much of a disposition to war and conquest, as ever she did in the days of Lewis XIV. She indeed made a decree, that she was to engage in no war but for her own defence, and she fulfilled it by invading the territories of the Emperor, and attacking Mons and Tournay, before he had either declared war against her, or had an army in the field to oppose her. Did she not over-run Savoy, while its sovereign had so little thought of war as not to have the vestige of an army to oppose her? Did she not first violate the rights of Holland, by her decree for opening the *Scheldt*, and then invade her territories with a powerful army, before Holland had moved a tongue against her? Did she not declare war against Britain, and stop all our ships in her ports, before our court had formed any resolution of making war upon her? So far is it from being true that republican government is more favourable to peace than monarchy, that the scope it gives to the ambition of individuals, and the necessity that those in power are under of finding employment for that ambition, unavoidably hurries them into wars; and it will not be denied, that some of the strongest advocates for that sort of government have attempted to prove its superiority to all other forms, by this, that

* Dan. vii. 7.

it best provides for war†. If the nations of Europe should all dismiss their kings, and set up a popular government, with a view to secure themselves against war; it would be the same policy as if the Dutch, in order to drain their marshes, should break down all their dykes.

“ But our king has too much power and influence; “ so that he over-rules the other branches of the legislature, and every thing is carried in Parliament, “ according to the pleasure of the court.” As a proof of this, we are reminded of a vote past in the House of Commons, some years ago, “ that the influence of the “ crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be “ diminished.” But, could such a vote have passed, if Parliament had been such a tool of the crown as is alleged? Besides, the influence of the crown is not now the same as at the time of that vote. In consequence of it, two acts of Parliament passed, in order to reduce the influence complained of, as low as could be done without hurting the balance of the constitution. By the one all persons holding government contracts, were disabled from sitting in the House of Commons; and all officers of the revenue from voting in the election of members of Parliament: and by the other, a number of sinecure places were abolished, the salaries of which amounted to L. 72,368 a year. But, in order to know what weight is in the argument of there being too great power or influence in the Crown, let us take a view of those branches of the prerogative, that are considered as most exceptionable.

The king has the power of calling, proroguing, and dissolving Parliaments. But how can this have any

† See Alg. Sydney's discourses on government, ch. ii. sect. 23.

dangerous effects? He must call a new Parliament, at least once in seven years. And though the law requiring that the Parliament should meet once a year, *if necessary*, might be evaded, and has been evaded, under pretence that it was not necessary; yet, in the present circumstances, such an evasion cannot take place: nor is it likely that it ever can, in any time to come; because, while the supplies are only granted from year to year, the meeting of Parliament is so necessary, that the army would be, *ipso facto*, disbanded, the interest of the national debt would remain unpaid, and the whole business of government would be at a stand, if any year should pass without a meeting of Parliament.

The king has the power of appointing officers, civil, ecclesiastical, and military, and of granting places and pensions; and, by this means, may indirectly bribe members of Parliament, and bring them over to the court side. But this part of the prerogative is likewise under such regulations, that it cannot easily become hurtful; for—1. The most important offices are given for life, such as those of the judges, bishops, and others. Though the king can give them, he cannot take them away. And if once a man has obtained what was the aim of his ambition, his gratitude will hardly influence him to vote, either to the diminution of his own consequence as a member of the legislature, or in opposition to his party, or to his conscience, if he has any. How often have we seen a young clergyman in Scotland cringe to a patron for a presentation: and, as soon as he had obtained it, prosecute his benefactor for an augmentation of stipend; because he knows, that he cannot recall his gift? Men are not

more grateful to kings, than to others who do them a like favour.—2. According to law, no person can enjoy a seat in Parliament, who is concerned in the management of any tax, imposed since the year 1692; nor any who enjoys an office under the crown, created since the year 1705: no more can any commissioner of prizes, of the navy or victualling office, nor any comptroller of army accounts, agent for regiments, or clerk in any of the offices of the revenue; nor any who enjoys a pension from the crown during pleasure, or for any specified term of years. So that if a member of Parliament accepts any of these, he not only loses his seat, but is incapable of being re-elected.—3. If any member accepts any office from the crown, of what kind soever it be, unless it be an officer in the army or navy accepting a new commission, his seat is thereby vacated: and if it be dangerous for him to continue in Parliament, the blame cannot lie upon the crown; but upon the people who choose him anew.

Besides these legal provisions against the bad effects of court influence; experience shews, that neither offices, nor dignities, nor pensions, are sufficient to stop the mouths of those who are disposed to join the opposition. In fact every office in the gift of the Crown operates two ways. They who thirst for these things, hope to obtain them, not oftener by voting for the court, than by roaring against it. These bawl out against every measure of government, good or bad, in hopes that administration will come up to their price. And after an office has been obtained, they who enjoy it do not on that account stick to the court party. How many instances have we seen of men eating the bread of go-

vernment, and yet lifting up their heel against it? It may be odious to mention names; but plenty of instances will occur to every one.

Moreover, every attentive person may see, and every true friend of his country will see it with pleasure, that when the tide of party runs highest, and when the court has the greatest majority on its side, if a measure is proposed, that is manifestly contrary to the interest of the nation, all the influence of the court is not able to carry it. Thus the Duke of Richmond's Fortification Bill was lost by a great majority; and so was the Scots Militia Bill, though administration was strengthened by the interest of all the Scotch Members. In matters of smaller importance, court influence, or attachment to a party, may sway a majority in either House. But I hope there are still as many Britons in Parliament, of independent fortunes, and independent spirits, as will ever be able to prevent any party, whatever their influence may be, from doing any material injury to the country.

"But our king has also the power of making peace
 "and war, and of entering into treaties with foreign
 "nations: and hence he may involve us in a ruinous
 "war, and subject us to new taxes to defray the ex-
 "pence; or he may enter into alliances disgraceful or
 "expensive to the nation. And where shall we find re-
 "drefs?"—True; such powers belong to the king: but if he enter into any war, prejudicial to the nation, he cannot carry it on without money; and money he cannot have, till it is granted by Parliament. Or, if he enter into any treaty, which brings any expence upon the nation, that treaty cannot be carried into effect till the

Parliament grant him the requisite sum. The Court will, therefore, take care how they enter into any war, or any such treaty, till they have security that Parliament will second their views: because they well know that the House of Commons, as keepers of the national purse, have it always in their power to defeat their intentions, and expose them to shame among surrounding nations. Yea, they have power to impeach the minister who advised the pernicious measure; and to bring him, if he deserves it, to the block. Thus the minister's safety lies in his pleasing the nation; as he must justify every measure in the House of Commons, in the face of those who want to fill his place, and who exert every talent to expose his errors or mistakes.

Again we are told, that "kings are very expensive things. This nation pays no less than a million yearly to a man, for nothing but what any cobbler might do as well: and all this might be saved by sending over him and his family to Germany."—They, who speak in this manner, neither know what they say, nor whereof they affirm. They labour under two capital mistakes. 1. That million of money, which is called the *Civil List*, does not all go to the maintenance of the king's family. From it are paid all the salaries of the judges, the officers of state, and officers of the household; all the expence incurred either by the residence of foreign ambassadors at our court, or for maintaining our ambassadors abroad;—besides pensions, secret service money; and, in a word, the whole expence of the civil government. Whatever money is laid out by administration, it must be taken from this sum, unless it is otherwise expressly provided for by Parliament; as

well as what goes to the maintenance of the king's family*. It must, therefore, be either very ignorant or very wicked in men to cry out of all this expence as incurred by the royal family; and then to cry out of pensions and salaries to the servants of government, as if all these were distinct things, when they are all included in this one. The business of the nation must be done: no man is obliged to serve her for nought: nay, it is highly reasonable that her servants, like those of private men, be allowed wages, not only in proportion to the weight of their work, but likewise to the dignity of their employer, and to the risk and expence of fitting themselves for situations that are precarious when obtained, and cannot be filled without considerable talents and accomplishments; besides they must be enabled to support a degree of splendour proportioned to their rank; otherwise both themselves and their offices will fall into contempt. And if this is done, though all the royal family were sent to Botany Bay, it would be comparatively a small part of this begrudged sum that the nation would save by that means.

2. It is a very great mistake, that the advantages which the nation derives from royalty are not sufficient to balance all the expence of maintaining it. Is not the whole executive power lodged in the king's hand? And is not the execution of the laws; the protection of our persons, liberties, and property; the administration of justice; and the preservation of the public peace in all the British dominions,—worth one million yearly?—It may be said, that the laws could be executed without

* Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. I. p. 331. Encyclopædia Britannica, article CIVIL LIST.

a king. But no man who understands the subject will say that it could be done to such advantage, or with as much safety. Every division of the executive power must tend to weaken it. To lodge it in the hands of many would be to give each a power of oppressing the people with impunity. By lodging it in one hand, the nation can more easily watch its motions, and detect and prevent every attempt to abuse it. "One peculiar excellence of the British government, is its having thrown into one place the whole mass of the executive power. By this very circumstance has the *depositum* of it been rendered sacred and inexpugnable. By making one very great man in the state, has an effectual check been put to the pretensions of all those who would otherwise strive to become such; and disorders have been prevented, which, in all republics, have brought on the ruin of liberty*." Besides, is it no advantage to us that the king holds the balance between the two Houses of Parliament; and, while he prevents the nobility from being trampled on by the Commons, effectually prevents the people from being crushed by the weight of a powerful aristocracy?

Still they rejoin:—"Our crown is hereditary; and this an absurdity shocking to common sense. What! Are not all men born equal? Or, is one man born a king, and all the rest of the nation born slaves?"—It is very true that all men are born equal; that is, every person comes into the world a naked and helpless infant, possessing nothing, and capable to do nothing for himself. But is it not as true, that, by the laws of all civilized nations, one is born heir to a great estate, and ano-

* De Lolme, p. 196, 197.

ther is heir to nothing but rags and misery? And why may not a similar law make one man be born heir to a kingdom, while another is born a subject? The antiquated claim of *divine hereditary right*, I hope, will never be again revived in Britain. But our crown is rendered hereditary, not only by the sanction of the national will for more than two centuries past, but by an express and solemn deed of the nation. An act of the legislature, passed with the general approbation of the people, declared the crown hereditary in the reigning family, upon certain conditions. And that act continued to be approved by the whole nation, excepting a few adherents of the Pretender's divine right; and to be gloried in, as the chief security of our religion and liberties,—till Thomas Paine taught us to think otherwise. That act, like all the other laws of Britain, being established by the joint authority of KING, LORDS, and COMMONS, has the force of a solemn compact, by which all the orders of the state are equally bound. And while the conditions therein stipulated continue to be observed by the family of Hanover, neither the Parliament, nor the people, have any power to abolish or alter it without the king's consent, more than they have to abrogate every other law that has been past by the same authority, and to abolish the whole constitution. If ever these conditions shall be violated by that family, the contract will be dissolved, and their hereditary right will cease. The nation will then unite in turning them off the throne; as they have done their predecessors. But, till then, whoever shall attempt any thing to the prejudice of their right will be justly considered as traitors to their country; and all ranks in the nation will concur, as in duty bound, in bringing them to punishment.

How much advantage has been derived to the nation from this Act of Settlement, since it was past, on the 12th of June 1700, will be easily perceived by every person who knows what miseries have followed, in this and other countries, from a disputed succession, and even from an elective government. How much blood was spilt in England during the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster? What calamities did Scotland suffer, while the crown was disputed by the families of Baliol and Bruce?—And what has made Poland a scene of anarchy and of carnage, for many ages past, as often as the death, the ejection, or the resignation of her kings, has made a new election necessary? The want of such a settlement as we have, is the very thing that has reduced one of the most powerful and warlike kingdoms of Europe to the necessity of submitting to be parcelled out by neighbouring despots, without having it in her power to make the least resistance. Of this the Poles are so sensible, that, by the constitution which was voluntarily accepted by king, nobles, and people, a few years ago, their crown was to be hereditary, as ours is. And indeed their object was to obtain a constitution as nearly resembling that of Great Britain as possible.

The Prince of Wales is considered as heir apparent of the crown of Britain, not on account of any natural difference between him and other men; not because he is descended from a race of kings who have reigned since the earliest accounts of this Island:—but because he has been so declared by a standing law, a solemn deed of the nation. By virtue of the same deed, we are born, not his slaves, but—heirs to that liberty and peace which it has secured to us. In all this, what is there inconsis-

ent with reason, with common sense, with the rights of men, or even with that natural equality, which, though it may be an object of speculation, can have no actual subsistence among mankind in a social state.

It has been objected, that, by this hereditary succession, it may happen that the nation may be governed by a fool, a tyrant, or an idiot. But he must either be a fool, or something worse, that lays any stress upon this objection. If, by reason of infancy, or any other cause, our hereditary king should be disqualified for the actual exercise of government; the law has provided a remedy. The administration falls into the hands of a regency, in whom the nation may confide, as being appointed by the nation itself. If our king should ever happen to be a weak man, the Parliament are his hereditary council; and he will be assisted by all the wisdom of the nation. If he should even be a man of an arbitrary and tyrannical disposition, the law has cut off the claws of the lion. The fate of the first Charles, and the second James, will teach him to restrain himself within the bounds prescribed by law. Or if he does not, he breaks the contract; his right to the crown ceases; and the nation will provide him a successor. Before people decide, with regard to hereditary succession, they would need to know more of the matter, than what is to be learned from Paine's invectives. Suppose a chief magistrate were to be elected by the whole nation, would not that man who knew how to flatter the vanity, and humour the prejudices, of the populace, however profligate his character, be as likely to be chosen, as a man of wisdom and prudence, free from restless ambition, and above sacrificing the public interest, to his own, or that of his family?

Is it of no consequence, that he who is to be a king have such an education as may qualify him for the duties of his high station? Does not the limitation of the succession to one family tend to prevent our kings from being infected with those little jealousies, and party connections, which are so favourable to selfishness, avarice, and cruelty; and so repugnant to that magnanimity, justice, and mercy, that ought to distinguish the man who rules a great nation? Would not the election of a king give much more scope to corruption, than that of members of Parliament, or of persons in any inferior office? Or has ever an executive government been erected or maintained, with so little animosity, disturbance, or danger to public liberty, as by a limited hereditary monarchy?

Such a hereditary succession as we have, is likewise agreeable to scripture; and is plainly exemplified in that government, which God himself set up. Though the government in Israel was a theocracy, that is, though God himself was their king, and therefore might have appointed whom he would for his deputy, without consulting the people, and actually did so in the days of the judges; yet no kings were ever imposed upon them, without their consent, nor any but such as themselves had chosen. Saul was expressly chosen by the people*. And though David had been previously anointed by Samuel, at the command of God; yet he did not think himself authorised to take upon him the administration, even after the death of Saul, till the people had invested him with it. Accordingly, he was chosen and anointed king, by the tribe of Judah assembled at Hebron †: and

* 1 Sam. xii. 12.

† 2 Sam. ii. 4.

over them only he claimed any right to reign, till he was also chosen by the people of Israel, seven years afterwards *. And though God had promised that the throne should be hereditary in David's line, upon certain conditions; yet this was not considered as legally fixing the succession, till it was done by a deed of the people. Accordingly, when Solomon died, all Israel assembled at Shechem, to make Rehoboam king; and when he refused to comply with the conditions which they stipulated, ten tribes rejected him, and he reigned over two only.

It deserves particular notice, that it is not said, in the history of that transaction, that the tribe of Judah clave to Rehoboam, or followed him; but they *followed the house of David*†. From hence it would appear, that after the ten tribes were gone, the people of Judah and Benjamin, justly apprehensive of the renovation of such a scene as they had just witnessed, agreed, by a solemn national deed, to fix the succession in the family of David. Accordingly, we hear no more of their assembling again for the choice or inauguration of Rehoboam's successors: but the son regularly occupied his father's throne, without any further interposition of the people; unless when the succession was interrupted by Athaliah's usurpation. At any rate, we are sure, that the succession in that line was hereditary: that it was so by the appointment of God, and with the consent of the people: and therefore, that all the scurrility, spued out by our modern reformers, against hereditary succession, applies equally to the constitution of the kingdom of Judah, as to that of Britain. If the one is inconsistent with reason, with common sense, or with the rights of man, so was the other: Conse-

* 2 Sam. v. 1.

† 1 Kings xii. 20.

quently, God, the Fountain of reason, the Creator of man, and the Giver of all his rights, not only set up a government among his chosen and beloved people, that was destructive of all these, but continued to support it for nearly five hundred years!

To take off the force of this argument, we are told, that God gave them this form of government, as a punishment; because they rejected him from being their King, and would needs have a king like the other nations: and what was a punishment to them can never be a blessing to any other people. In support of this the words of God by the prophet Hosea, are often quoted: *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath**. But it is plain that these words were addressed to the ten tribes: and all interpreters understand them either of Saul, in whom they were literally fulfilled, or else of that race of kings, who had reigned in Israel, from the time of their revolt from David's family, and from the worship of the true God; and whom God was just about to take away by the hand of the king of Assyria. But until the present time, it never yet entered into the mind of any person, who had a right publicly to interpret scripture, to understand these words of David or of his family. How could it? In what sense was ever David given in anger? Or how could his family be said to have been taken away in the days of Hosea, when it continued to reign an hundred and fifty years after? The setting up of that family was ever considered by the people of God, as an act of singular favour, and was celebrated, as such, in their public praises†. It may be said, that the people were mistaken: and that

* Hosea xiii. 11. † Psal. lxxviii. 70, 71. Psal. cxxxii. 11, 12.

the Queen of Sheba was also mistaken, when she said to Solomon, "Because the Lord thy God loved Israel
"for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice†!" But was the Spirit of God mistaken, when he indited the psalms referred to in the margin? Or has the church, from the days of David to the present time, been publicly praising God, for setting up and maintaining among his people, a government inconsistent with reason and common sense!

Christians should also consider, that in those injunctions, which are laid upon us in the New Testament, to be subject to the higher powers, kings are expressly mentioned: that we are specially called to pray, and even to give thanks for kings: That Jesus Christ himself is a king, though his kingdom is not of this world: and that if the kingly office among men had been a thing disagreeable to God, or to reason, the Son of God had never been disgraced with the name, or with the office. Christ is even a hereditary king, sitting "on the throne
"of his father David, to order it, and to establish it,
"from henceforth and for ever." They should consider, that there are many promises and prophecies, contained in the word of God, and which we hope to see accomplished in due time, more fully than they have ever yet been, that plainly and necessarily suppose the continued existence of kings, and their activity in promoting the interests of Christ. "Kings shall be nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers" to the church. "All kings shall bow down before Christ,
"and all nations shall serve him. The kings of the
"earth shall bring their glory and honour into" the

† 1 Kings 2. 9.

new Jerufalem*. In answer, therefore, to those who exprefs their hopes, that monarchy fhall soon be abolifhed, in all the nations of the world, we rejoice in declaring our firm affurance, that while Chrift has a church upon earth, and while there are nations to ferve him, there fhall alfo be kings to bow down, and they fhall bow down before him.

These arguments from fcripture, are fo plain and conclufive, in favours of limited royalty, that Mr. Paine himfelf, in various parts of his writings, feems plainly enough to hint, that, along with kingly government, the Scriptures alfo muft be extruded. And now, where his principles are reduced to practice, his colleagues of the rump convention, have found it neceffary, in order to juftify their abolition of kings, to abolifh Chriftianity too. What elfe could be their defign, in abolifhing the Chriftian fabbath, which is appointed by God, not only as a weekly commemoration of his two great works, of creation and redemption, but likewife as the diftinguifhing badge of his religion: or, as the Scriptures exprefs it, a *figh between* him and his people *for ever*? Yet thefe are the men, and this is the constitution, which fome in Britain, and even fome who pretend to be zealous Chriftians, wifh to imitate. *My foul, come not thou into their fecrets; unto their afsembly, mine honour, be not thou united!*

* See Ifa. xlix. 23. Pfal. lxxii. 11. Rev. xxi. 24.

E S S A Y V.

ON PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION and
REFORM.

ONE of the principal advantages of the British constitution lies in this, that one branch of the legislature is composed of representatives chosen by the people. Yet there is nothing that is more complained of by discontented persons, than the present state of that representation. And the mode now introduced into France is extolled, as incomparably better than ours. But a very moderate degree of attention will convince any one, that our system of representation is incomparably better than theirs. To mention only two particulars:

1. In France, by the constitution of 1791, no person was to have a voice in the primary assemblies, but such as contributed directly towards the expences of the state, the value of three days labour; nor any menial servant; nor any that was not enrolled in the national guards.— And no person could vote for the national representatives, in the electoral assemblies, who was not valued, on the rolls of contribution, at an yearly revenue, equal, at least, to 150 days labour. But in England, every person is entitled to vote for a member of Parliament, who enjoys a free income of forty shillings a year, which is not earned by servitude: and this right is not forfeited by his receiving wages. Many electors in England

pay nothing directly to Government: and what every one pays indirectly, it is impossible to determine. Thus it is plain, that in England, many are electors, who, in France, could have no place, even in a primary assembly: and many more, who could not be chosen electors*.

2. In France, according to the above-mentioned constitution, he who was to represent the département in the legislature, might be chosen, contrary to the mind of a great majority of the active citizens, who were entitled to vote in their primary assemblies: which may be clearly illustrated thus. In France, every 100 active citizens were to choose an elector. These electors were to meet in what was to be called an electoral assembly; where the representative of the department was to be chosen. Now, suppose this mode adopted in Britain, and suppose the number of active citizens in any county, amounts to ten thousand; every hundred of these is to choose one elector, making an hundred in all. These hundred electors are to choose one to represent the county in Parliament, or, if you please, in convention. Suppose the nation, as it usually is, divided into two parties; and, for distinction's sake, let Mr. Pitt be at the head of one party, and Mr. Fox at the head of the other. Of the hundred primary assemblies, consisting of a hundred active citizens each, fifty-one choose electors of Mr. Pitt's faction, by a majority of sixty to forty, at a medium. It is plain, that among all these, there are in Mr. Pitt's interest, *three thousand and sixty*

* How these matters stand in that thing called a constitution, which the present convention have framed, I know not; having never seen more of it than what was exhibited in public newspapers.

active citizens, and *two thousand and forty* in that of Mr. Fox. The other *forty-nine* assemblies choose electors of Mr. Fox's party, by a majority of *eighty to twenty*, one with another: here there must be *three thousand nine hundred and twenty* citizens in favours of Mr. Fox, and *only nine hundred and eighty* for Mr. Pitt.—Thus, in the whole county, Mr. Fox has *five thousand nine hundred and sixty* on his side, while Mr. Pitt has only *four thousand and forty*: yet the election is carried in Mr. Pitt's favours, by *fifty-one* against *forty-nine*. Thus almost three fifths of the active citizens are really against the person who is chosen to represent them: but, among us, whoever the electors be, we are sure that their representatives are chosen by the majority of them.

Various other mistakes people labour under, with regard to the affair of representation, which we shall endeavour to rectify, by the following observations.

I. A man may be truly, fairly, and equitably represented, by one whom he has never chosen for that purpose. Every member of the House of Commons represents those who voted against him, as well as them who voted for him. Yea, whenever a man is chosen, he ceases to be a representative of that city or county only, by which he was chosen: and becomes a representative of the British people at large. And every individual among that people is represented, not by any particular member of Parliament only; but by the whole house. This doctrine has been supported by the best writers on our government, and by those most favourable to liberty*.

There are various ways, in which a true and just re-

* Blackstone's Comm. v. I. p. 159.

presentation may be constituted, without the choice of those who are represented. Every man has a natural right to represent his own family, and even his posterity, to the latest generations. As this right is founded in the law of nature, it is recognized by the municipal laws of all civilized nations. And every man exercises it in every civil transaction. If I enter into any contract, and do not live to fulfil it, my obligation is binding upon my heirs and executors to the end of time; because I truly represented them in that transaction, though it took place long before they were born. Under the feudal system, every great man was the representative of his vassals and dependents; and thus the people in Britain were, in a sort, represented in Parliament, before a choice of representatives was known. By the British constitution, the king is the representative of the whole nation. It is the majesty and authority of the nation, that is collected, and centers in his person. It is in the name of the whole nation, that he transacts with foreign powers, whether in making peace or war, or alliances of any kind: and as a proof that every individual is included in this representation, every one in the nation is as much bound by the king's transactions as himself is. Yet I need not add, that there is not a person now alive in the nation, that had any active hand in choosing him to be king.

To Christians we may address an argument of still greater weight, in support of representation, where there has been no election. Every one who adheres to the Protestant doctrine, as laid down in the standards, either of the church of England, or of the church of Scotland, must believe, that, by a transaction co-eval with

the world itself, Adam was constituted the federal representative of all his posterity: and that, by a similar transaction, prior to that date, the Son of God became the representative of his spiritual seed. In neither of these cases could the persons represented have any choice; because none of them had any being. And therefore, if the choice of constituents is of absolute necessity, both these transactions must have been unjust. Some of those who are most zealous, in favour of our new system of politics, will be perfectly aware of the force of this argument: and, to avoid it, deny that any such transaction ever existed. That they may be consistent with themselves, they go further, and deny the divinity of Christ, his vicarious satisfaction, the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures, and all the most important articles of the Christian faith. Yet these are the men, with whom some well-meaning Calvinists associate themselves, in our present disputes; without being aware, that if they adhere to Dr. Priestly's political creed, they must likewise adopt his religious system, in order to be consistent with themselves.

II. It follows from what has been said, that a man may be rightfully and equitably bound, to obey laws, in the making of which he never had any share, either by himself, or by any whom he had chosen to represent him. However plausible, in point of theory, that maxim be, that men cannot be bound by any laws, to the making of which they have not given their consent, by themselves, or their chosen representatives; it is a maxim, that, so far as ever I could learn, was never heard of, till after the commencement of our disputes with the Colonies in America. It was never reduced to

practice, before that time, nor since; in Britain, nor in America, nor in France, nor in any other part of the world. I may venture to say, that it never will be reduced to practice; because I am absolutely sure it never can. Must not every man, in every country, be subject to laws that were made before he was born, or capable to choose a representative? Are not the poor, who can contribute nothing to the support of government, subject to the laws, as well as the rich? And is not the protection of the laws more necessary to those, than to these? Are not minors subject to the laws, as well as persons come to age? Above all, are not all women members of society, subject to the laws of their country, and contributing to the support of government, directly or indirectly? Are they not entitled to all the unalienable rights of human creatures, as well as men? How comes it, then, that in such an age of gallantry, no man appears for the right of the ladies to choose their representatives, to sit in legislative assemblies?—In a word, if ever the above maxim is put in practice, it must be in a place, where all minors, all women, and even all gipsies and sturdy beggars, are allowed to vote in the choice of representatives. And, if this is one of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man, two thirds of the human species must be for ever deprived of it.

When the scriptures so frequently injoin subjection to the powers that be, both in the Old Testament and in the New, can any man believe, that they only require obedience to such laws as have been made, either by ourselves or our representatives? Had the captive Jews any representatives, in the Chaldean, or the Persian legislature? Had the Jews in our Saviour's days, or the

Christians of the dispersion, when Peter wrote, any representatives in the Roman senate, or any voice in the assemblies of that people? Rather, had they any vote in the choice of the Emperor; who, by that time, was become the sole legislator of the Roman world? Or do these passages only bind us to subjection to such a government, as never yet existed; and, in the nature of things, never can? A new proof, this, that the total rejection of the scriptures, and the abolition of Christianity, must be a branch of our new political system, in order to make it hang together.

III. It is very certain, that there never was a time, as far back as history can be traced, when all the inhabitants of Britain, or of either of the two united kingdoms, were considered as having a right to vote, in the choice of representatives, to sit in Parliament. It is well known, that though Parliaments are of a very old date, both in England and Scotland, parliamentary representation is not so. At what time soever the feudal system was introduced in Britain, it is agreed, that, according to it, all the King's tenants *in capite*, i. e. all that held lands immediately of the crown, were entitled to a seat in Parliament, and none else. This was so far from being considered as a privilege, by the proprietors of small estates, that it was reckoned an intolerable burden. After sundry efforts to compel their attendance, they were allowed to be absent, upon condition of sending two or more from each county, to represent them. When this regulation was introduced in England, is uncertain; owing to the loss of their records: but it seems to be agreed that it was not before the latter end of the reign of King John, who died in

1216. With regard to Scotland, we can speak with more certainty. James I. had an act past, in the year 1425, requiring the personal attendance of all free-holders. But this being found ineffectual, another act was past, in 1427, by which the small barons were exempted, upon condition of sending two or more wise men, out of every shire, to represent them: yet still they had a right to attend in person, if they pleased. After all, few of them attended, either by themselves or representatives, till the year 1587, when James VI. with much difficulty, got the act of 1427 revived. And it is only from that time, that there has been a regular attendance of county representatives in Scotland.

When the representatives of boroughs were introduced into Parliament is more uncertain. It appears to have been sooner than the representatives of counties were introduced. But this is certain, that boroughs, as well as individuals, were obliged to give attendance, as being the king's tenants. And the only reason of their being allowed to send representatives, was, that it would have been an intolerable hardship, to require the attendance of all the members of the corporation. It shall only be further observed, on this head, that the right of election in counties, stands upon a very different footing in England, from what it does in Scotland; though both were originally the same. It would serve little purpose to trace the various steps, by which this difference was introduced. With us, no person has a right to vote in such elections, unless he holds lands of the crown, either in property, or superiority, amounting either to forty shillings of old extent, or to L. 400 Scots of valued rent: whereas, beyond the border, every per-

son is an elector, who possesses freehold property to the value of forty shillings sterling yearly; whether he holds of the king or a subject, provided he does not earn it by actual servitude.

When people talk of a reform in the representation of the people, it conveys the idea, of restoring the constitution to the same state in which it is supposed to have been, before the introduction of certain corruptions, which they propose to have remedied. Hence many people, who have not had opportunities of better information, take it for granted, that there was a time, when all the people were allowed to vote in the choice of the national representatives: and that this privilege has, somehow, been wrested from them. And designing men find their account in fostering their persuasion. But nothing can be more false. From the above statement, it is manifest, that there never was a time, when a greater number of persons were allowed to vote in such elections. Of all the changes that have taken place in our constitution, for many centuries back, I do not recollect one, that has not been favourable to the people. The truth is, our constitution, from being exactly similar to those of other nations in Europe, where the feudal system prevailed, has gradually risen to its present happy state; through a variety of changes, all of which have been owing to the successful struggles of the subjects, in behalf of their rights and liberties: whereby we are become the envy of all neighbouring nations.

I know but of one instance, that is condescended upon, of degeneracy in the state of our representation. It is in the case of the rotten boroughs, as they are

called. Certain towns, that were once wealthy and populous, are now fallen into decay; so that some of them have scarcely the appearance of country villages. Yet they continue to send members to Parliament, as before. By this means, a good number of our members of Parliament are chosen by a few persons; while many thriving and populous towns send no representatives at all. This may be, in some degree, a real grievance: and, in due time I hope, a remedy may be provided. But there are various considerations, which, if duly attended to, might serve to allay the clamour that has been raised about it. 1. The change in the state of those towns is not owing to government; but has gradually come about, in the course of Divine Providence. Trade and manufactures, after flourishing, for a while, in one place, have emigrated to another; and thus one town has fallen into decay, and another has risen, in its stead. Government could not prevent this; nor would it have been proper to attempt it. 2. These boroughs, rotten as they are, have been long possessed of the privilege of sending members to Parliament: it is secured to them by charter: and it deserves consideration, how far it would be just to deprive them of it, without their own consent; or without a suitable compensation. 3. Those towns that have lately risen to opulence, and send no members to Parliament, are not unrepresented. Every person in those towns, that is worth forty shillings yearly, has a vote for the county members. 4. Whatever complaints the people of England may have on this head, we in Scotland have little ground for any. None of these rotten boroughs are on our side the Tweed;

and our populous manufacturing towns that have no vote in elections, are yet but few.

IV. If it were practicable, that all the people, of every rank in Britain, should have an equal voice in the choice of the national representatives, it would not be just. This will be thought a bold assertion; but it admits of an easy proof. All the objects of legislation may be comprehended under these three, *life, liberty, and property*: and every good law is intended for the security of one or other of these. With regard to the two first, mankind are upon a level. And if our Parliament were only to make laws relative to these, every man would have an equal right to choose representatives. But, in making laws respecting property, reason dictates, that every man's influence should be in proportion to the property he possesses. And as land is the most fixed kind of property, and the radical source of national wealth, it is highly reasonable, that landholders should have a principal concern in the making of such laws. Now, every one sees, that for one law that merely respects life or liberty, ten laws are past for the security or regulation of property: it is necessary that it should be so. And therefore justice requires that a man of property, especially of landed property, should have ten votes, in the choice of legislators, where a man of no property has but one: and the more property he possesses, he is entitled to the greater number of votes. Of this the French national assembly were sensible; and accordingly attached two thirds of their representatives to the property, and only one third to the population. A man, whose mind is not warped with prejudice, nor heated with enthusiasm, however zealous

lous he is for his own rights as a man; can allow to others those rights that are connected with that station in life, which Providence has allotted them.

V. Supposing that a more equal representation of the people could be ever so easily obtained, it would not be productive of those advantages to persons in the lower ranks of life, that they are taught to expect from it: and it would produce inconveniences, of which they are not aware. I do not mean to state myself an enemy to reform, either in this respect, or in respect of shortening the duration of Parliaments. Perhaps both might be of advantage to the nation upon the whole. But I am persuaded, that if advantages are balanced with disadvantages, and into the latter scale are laid the difficulties, that every thinking person must see in the way of accomplishing such a reform, even though all parties were alike friendly to it, and the danger that might arise from any alteration in our constitution, people's zeal in that cause will be very much cooled. To mention a few instances.

1. This reform would neither prevent nor diminish that bribery and corruption, which are too often practised at elections. It would have the contrary effect. For proof of this we may appeal to facts. In the counties of Scotland there are much fewer electors, in proportion, than in those in England: yet there are no elections in Britain, where there is so little bribery and corruption, or so little riot and dissipation as in those of the Scottish counties. But let us suppose our reform obtained, and every man in the county made an elector, would this continue to be the case? Suppose the number of electors, in any county, is now an hundred: sup-

pose that after the reform, they shall amount to twenty thousand; and suppose them to be all alike honest: still it would be much easier to bribe a majority of the twenty thousand, than it is to bribe a majority of the hundred. Our present electors are men of independent fortunes: and, if they were to be sold, would disdain to take a small bribe. No man would dare to offer them less than L. 500 a piece, one with another. And therefore, to bribe fifty-one of the hundred, would cost him L. 25500. But in the other case, there would be no occasion to bribe gentlemen. A majority of poor labourers and mechanics might be found, to whom twenty shillings would be a greater object than L. 500 is to our present electors. And therefore one might bribe a majority of the twenty thousand, by expending only L. 10000.—The truth is, it will not be easy to find a remedy for corruption, till we can find electors that will take no bribe. And surely the less they need it, the less temptation they have to take it. It is not candidates that are most to blame, when a seat is obtained in this way; but electors. No man can be supposed as willing to give away money, as another may be to receive it. And the only reason why gentlemen offer bribes, is because they see a probability of obtaining a seat in that way, and in no other.

It is said, that the court is the source of corruption: and that candidates hope to refund themselves, by places, pensions, or bribes, for all that they expend in corrupting their electors. It may easily be believed that he who buys a people will sell them again: and every corrupt member of Parliament hopes to refund himself; just as every corrupt elector hopes to better his fortune

by the bribe he receives. But it is more than ten to one that both are disappointed. For one elector that is enriched by selling his vote, ten are reduced to poverty by trusting to such a resource: and for one member of Parliament that has his expences refunded, by places, pensions, or otherwise, there are ten whose estates and families feel the contrary, for sundry generations. There is no doubt but a corrupt court will rather buy off a member from the opposition, than lose a favourite measure: and there is as little doubt, that an unprincipled candidate will rather bribe his electors than lose his seat. But if members of Parliament were honest, no bribe would influence them to vote against their judgment: and if electors were conscientious, they would give their vote to no man who should offer them a bribe. As soon as this is found to be the case, both courts and candidates will keep their money in their pockets. Thus it appears, that, though neither the court nor the members of Parliament are innocent, the principal blame lies upon electors; as the guilt of sin lies chiefly, not upon Satan who tempts to it, but on the sinner who yields to the temptation. And if every temptation was to cost him ten thousand pounds, any other than Satan would soon cease to tempt, if sinners would cease to comply.

If the number of electors were increased, there would, no doubt, be among them a greater number of honest men; but there would be a greater number of rogues too: for I have never yet observed, that there was a greater proportion of morally honest men, in the lowest ranks of life, than among their superiors. And it is absurd to suppose, that they who need money most, will

be most averse to take it. It may rather be suspected that many of those who now make such a bustle, about a more equal representation of the people, are men grieved to see themselves out of the way of receiving a share of what they think is to be had at elections: and wish to have a vote, only that they may have it in their power to sell it to the highest bidder.

Even though we had a new Parliament every year or every three years, this would have no effect in preventing bribery. Triennial Parliaments have been tried: and perhaps the nation might have suffered no inconvenience from their continuance. But neither do I know any great inconvenience that has arisen from their being made septennial. One reason given for the change was, that gentlemen were hurt, by the expence of such frequent elections: a certain proof that they had their electors to bribe then as well as now. And surely an election every three years would not give less occasion to bribery, than one in seven. It would, indeed, give an opportunity to a greater number of gentlemen to ruin themselves, by setting up for members of Parliament: or the same gentleman might do it in less than half the time. It would procure, to corrupt electors, seven bribes in 21 years, instead of three: instead of nine days of riot and dissipation, in that space of time, the people might expect one and twenty. And those habits of drunkenness, idleness, perjury, and all kinds of vice, that are contracted at elections, would gather more than double strength in the same time. Were our elections annual, these consequences would follow in a threefold proportion. To some men these may be desirable things: but surely such men are not the fittest to regulate the government of nations.

Bribery and corruption are undoubtedly crying evils; and every habile method should be taken to abolish them. Many good laws have been made for that purpose: and many severe punishments have been inflicted upon those who have been found to transgress them. But still the ingenuity of wicked men has found methods to evade them. If it could be found practicable to abolish all canvassing for votes, it would be the best mean of preventing bribery. What if an act of Parliament should pass, declaring every man incapable of a seat in the House of Commons, who should be proved to have declared himself a candidate, either in public or in private, till he did it publicly, on the hustings, in the day of election? By this means no man would have it in his power, either to give or to receive a bribe. Some would, no doubt, be disappointed, who would wish to have a seat: but they would keep their money. And I am persuaded, neither town nor county in Britain would find themselves at a loss, for men both willing and qualified to accept such a trust, when it should be voluntarily offered them.

2. This proposed reform would give no security to the people, that the proceedings of Parliament would be more agreeable to their wishes. Our representatives are not, like those of the states of Holland, confined to a bare declaration of the mind of their constituents. If they were, they would have nothing to do in Parliament, but to vote as they had been instructed: Parliament could deliberate about nothing; but it behaved every bill that was to be brought into the House of Commons, first to be discussed in a public meeting of the electors, in every town and county in Britain.

What a dead weight this would hang upon the wheels of government, every person of common understanding must see. But with us, when a man is chosen a member of Parliament, neither he nor his constituents know what bills are to be brought in, nor what arguments are to be used, for or against any of them. His electors can therefore give him no instructions how he is to vote in any cause; nor is he bound to follow them if they do. He is to follow the dictates of his own judgment and conscience. And whether he is chosen by many or by few, whether chosen every year, or every seven years, his judgment is neither more nor less likely to coincide with the judgment of the multitude. This, by the way, shews what we ought to think of those men, who, in order to obtain their election, cajole their constituents with promises to follow their instructions. The most favourable opinion we can have of them is, that they make such promises with a fixed resolution to break them; for unless this is the case, they must resolve never to pay any regard to their own conscience or judgment.

3. This reform could have no tendency to reduce our taxes, nor to prevent our entering into new wars, by which our burdens may be increased. With regard to present taxes, I shall speak more fully hereafter. With regard to war; if the nation were threatened by a foreign enemy, if any neighbouring nation should cramp our trade, or otherwise injure or insult us, I am persuaded the people of Britain have more spirit than to suffer it without defending themselves. Supposing the body of the people averse to war, it is plain from what has been said, that this reform gives no additional secu-

city, that Parliament will be of the same mind. But every one who knows any thing of our history must have perceived, that the people have always been as much inclined to war as either court or Parliament. The wars, in the days of King William and Queen Anne, were undoubtedly popular. Nor was there ever any measure of administration, since the revolution, more unpopular than the peace in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign. Yet, by these wars the foundation of the system of national debt was laid. The war which terminated in the year 1763, was undoubtedly the war of the people: and, though the peace of that year was the most honourable and advantageous to Britain, of any that ever she entered into, it may well be remembered how much it was blamed by the people. Indeed, if all the people in Britain could be made, instead of electors, members of Parliament, there is much reason to think that we would be engaged in more wars than ever.

4. Experience shews that we who have no vote in choosing members of Parliament, suffer no inconvenience on that account: and we may be well assured, that if we could obtain a vote, it would be of no solid advantage to us. The town of Jedburgh has a vote, and the town of Hawick has none. Are the people of Hawick subject to any oppressive laws, from which they of Jedburgh are free? Are trade, manufactures, or any useful improvement in a more flourishing state *there* than *here*? Or what have we to complain of, that does not lie equally heavy upon *them*? On the contrary, is it not manifest, through all Britain, that those towns that have no concern in elections, have risen to opulence, and are rising apace, while many of our Parliament boroughs

are lolling in indolence, strutting in pride, and sinking into insignificance? Sheffield, Birmingham, Manchester, Paisley, permit me to add, Hawick, and Galashiels, are instances of the former: instances of the latter are too common to require specification. Perhaps other causes may concur, in producing this effect; but I am persuaded it is not a little furthered by the exemption of those towns from the hurry and bustle, the riot and dissipation, the corruption, perjury, and chicanery, that too frequently attend elections. Should we in this town, for instance, ever obtain a vote in elections, it could not better our condition. We might indeed have an opportunity of spending a week or two, once in seven years, in drunkenness and debauchery, without much expence to ourselves. We might have canvassing and cajoling, and swearing and bribing among us, as our neighbours have, on every such occasion. Perhaps we might, now and then, have the pleasure of seeing our magistrates degraded, our privileges suspended, and commissioners appointed by a court of justice, to manage our public funds for seven years; as a punishment for our corruption. Our people, who now quietly mind their own business, and, by honest industry make a decent provision for their families, would acquire habits of idleness and vice. Our trade and manufactures would decline apace; and we would soon be remarkable for nothing, but poverty and pride. Unless we really wish for such a change, we had much better content ourselves as we are.

5. Besides all this, we in Scotland should consider, that if any advantage is to be derived from a reform in parliament, we could not enjoy an equal share of it. We are

limited by the Union, to forty-five members in the House of Commons. Supposing, as has been proposed, that one hundred more members were added to that house, our proportion of these would be no more than eight. And what advantage would we gain, by having eight more noses to shew? Perhaps we may be for breaking the Union, in hope of sending more representatives to Parliament; as, now-a-days, little regard is paid to treaties entered into by our forefathers; but how do we know that our English brethren will be equally willing to break it in this article? Perhaps we only want an increase of the number of electors, not of representatives; but what would that do for us? Is there any reason to think, that they who should be chosen by the many, would be more worthy of the trust, or would discharge it better, than they who have heretofore been chosen by the few? In Scotland, a much smaller proportion of the people are electors than in England: but has there been, since the Union, a smaller proportion of honest men, and friends to their country, among the Scottish, than among the English members?

Upon the whole, the principal thing to be attended to, in the matter of representation is, that the members of the House of Commons, being chosen from among the people, should never have an interest opposite to theirs; nor have it in their power to aggrandize or enrich themselves at their expence. While they can make no laws, that shall not affect themselves, as much as their fellow-subjects, it is comparatively of very small importance, who their electors be. They will always be attentive to the interests of the people, and will oppose every oppressive law, for their own sakes.

6. Supposing the proposed reform to be both proper and necessary, this is surely no time for driving such a measure. The nation is engaged in war; the legislature, as well as administration must have their attention engaged to that, and other matters of present necessity. And they cannot have such leisure to deliberate upon the business of reform, as the importance of the affair would require. Things may appear easy in theory, which are found very difficult, when we come to reduce them to practice. And, as no plan of reform has yet been proposed, by our *Friends of the People*, it is impossible for them to foresee what difficulties may occur, either in the formation of the plan, or in the execution of it: more especially as few of them have ever had an opportunity to know much about affairs of state. How many, for instance, are to be added, to the number of our representatives? Who are to have a right to be electors? What number of people are to send a member to Parliament; or how shall the numbers, at each election be ascertained; as they are always fluctuating? What proportion of the representation shall be attached to the soil; what to property, and what to population? And how are these differences to be ascertained? How shall the proportion between England and Scotland be fixed to mutual satisfaction? What compensation shall be given to our rotten boroughs, for the loss of their privileges, or to our freeholders, for dividing their rights with the multitude? Above all, how shall the balance of our constitution be preserved; and what security shall we have, that by loosing a few pins, we shall not bring down the whole fabric about our ears? Surely all these, and many other difficulties that might occur, would require

more deliberation, than can be bestowed upon them at the present crisis.

Neither can it be dissembled, that the present state of the country is very unfavourable to such an attempt. The minds of men are now as much divided about political subjects, as they have long been about matters of religion. Some are for a reform, and others against it. Some will have it now, and others at a more convenient time. Some will have royalty abolished, and all titles of honour; and some will be satisfied with a more equal representation in the House of Commons. Some will have annual Parliaments, and some wish them only triennial. Some cry out of one thing, and some of another: every one complains most loudly of what bears hardest upon himself. And perhaps our reformers themselves would not easily agree among themselves, as to what degree of reformation should be adopted.

But what, above all other things, renders this attempt unseasonable at this time, is, that they who are most clamorous for a reform, only wish for it as a step towards the total overthrow of our constitution, and the reducing to practice the whole system disseminated by Thomas Paine and his followers. Charity obliges us to think, that there are many who are prevailed with, in the simplicity of their hearts, to join the cry for reform, who would abhor the thoughts of destroying the constitution. But is there any doubt that the leaders of our new associations, adopted Paine's principles without reserve, and avowed themselves advocates for a total revolution, till they found government in earnest to punish the seditious? And if they durst, would they not be as loud still for a revolution, as they now are for

a reform? They hope, that if a reform to their mind could be obtained, a few more men might be got into Parliament, of their own kidney; and then they would find it easier to execute the rest of their plan. We have a few atheists, murderers, and pick-pockets; a few discontented, ambitious, and turbulent men in Britain, as well as in other nations. These men see what success their brethren elsewhere have had, in worming themselves into power, in overturning all government and all religion, in destroying liberty, property, and personal security, and in bringing to the guillotine all who were objects of their emulation or resentment. Their ambition is hereby set on fire. They long to taste the sweets of arbitrary power: and they do not yet despair of turning this land of liberty into another scene of confusion, blood, and horror, for that purpose. While such hopes are entertained, is this a time to talk of reform?

7. If this reform were both necessary and seasonable, the methods taken to obtain it are far from being warrantable. They are pregnant with mischief. To form societies or associations, in different parts of the united kingdom, under whatever designation,—to choose deputies in these societies,—of these deputies, together with others from a neighbouring kingdom, to erect a convention,—and in that convention to discuss the business of the nation at large, and concert measures, in avowed opposition to the constituted authorities;—what is all this, but to set up a government within a government? Do not these men usurp the authority of parliament; and practically declare, that if parliament will not come into their measures, they mean to carry them

by force; yea, to execute, as well as to enact by their own authority, if they can but make their party strong enough? If such proceedings are not punishable by law, it must only be, because nothing of the kind having ever been attempted in former times, there has never been occasion to make any law against them. The permission of such enormities is the strongest evidence, that, instead of a tyrannical government, we live under the mildest on earth*.

For the meeting of the *French* convention there was some reason; because the second national assembly had so much wisdom left as to dissolve themselves, and desert the helm which they could no longer guide: and they left no constituted authority in France. But to set up the image of the French convention among *us*, while the known and established authorities remain, is the most flagrant attempt that ever was made, to subvert all order, and introduce confusion and every evil work.

The British people have an unquestioned right to petition the king or either house of parliament. Their petitions, however unreasonable, if but conceived in decent terms, will be received: and if they are reasonable, I hope they will be granted. But surely the legislature must have a right to determine whether petitions shall be granted or not: otherwise why petition them? It is among the other excellencies of our constitution, that it has the principles of reform within itself. If de-

* Since writing the above, I am happy to hear that the Magistrates of the city and county of Edinburgh, have prohibited the meeting of the pretended convention in their bounds; for which they deservedly have the thanks of the friends of tranquillity and order; both there and in other places.

fects should be found in it, or should creep into it, through the lapse of time, as nothing human is either perfect or permanent,—it belongs to the legislature to reform these defects: they have power to do it; and I hope they will do it, if dutifully applied to. But to attempt to over-awe the legislature, and influence by clamour, or by the appearance of numbers, their decisions,—what is it, but an attempt, an impotent attempt I hope it will prove, to destroy their authority, and put the actual exercise of sovereignty in the hands of the populace?

From the time that the Jacobin Club at Paris, in concert with other associations of the same sort in other parts of the kingdom, and in conjunction with the mob of Paris, took upon them to decide upon the general business of the nation, and to prescribe measures to what was called the legislative assembly,—every thing has rushed into confusion in France. The present convention, ever since it met, has been no more than a tool in the hands of the Jacobin Club and the Paris rabble: and the world has been witness to the dreadful consequences. Similar causes will always produce similar effects. If ever our clubs and conventions shall become so powerful as to be able to dictate to parliament, or if parliament shall become so weak, in point of intellects, as to suffer them to attempt it with impunity, that day will put an end to all regular government and subordination among us. Our happy constitution, the work of ages, and the admiration of mankind, will go to wreck in one hour: and the same scene will be acted here, that has been in rehearsal, for eighteen months past, on the other side of the channel.

E S S A Y VI.

ON LIBERTY and EQUALITY.

“**W**HAT!” say our modern innovators, “shall we be precluded from seeking the redress of our grievances, in what way, or by what means we please? Are not liberty and equality the natural rights of men? And who shall deprive us of the one, or of the other?” Liberty is, doubtless, one of the most valuable earthly blessings; but, like all others, it is liable to be abused. Often has it been employed as a cloke of licentiousness: but it is only of late, that it has been coupled with equality. Let us examine, with candour, this new association.

Liberty is one of those things of which every man has some kind of conception, but which no man finds it easy to define. Passing over the various descriptions that have been given of it, it is manifest that perfect liberty must consist in *an unlimited power of doing what one pleases*: or of following the dictates of one’s own will, without any restraint from without himself. But it is equally manifest, that this sort of liberty is competent to God only: because none but he has a right to make his own sovereign will the sole rule of his actions. Or if any creature enjoy it, it must be a creature, whose will is exactly conformable to his. The will of God is the supreme rule of conduct to all rational creatures, as well as to himself: as none but He can be independent. He made his will known to the first

man, by writing his law in his heart: but this laid no restraint upon him till sin entered; because he followed his own will, in yielding obedience to his Creator. When sin shall be totally abolished in the people of God, and their will restored to its primitive conformity to the will of God, they will then be restored to perfect liberty; because they will fulfil their own will, in doing the will of their God and Saviour: and will be incapable to take pleasure in any thing that he prohibits. This is the case, even in this world, as far as they are sanctified: Hence, like David, they walk at liberty, because they seek God's precepts. This is that glorious liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free.

But, as all men, whether saints or sinners, while in this life, have much corruption about them, their wills must always be inclined, more or less, to what is contrary to God's will, and is prohibited by his law. That law, therefore, will always prove a great restraint upon the liberty of mortals. Supposing mankind to be in what is called the state of nature, before the formation of society, or the erection of government of any kind: in that case, no man was under any subjection to the will of any fellow-creature, nor was his will under any other restraint but the law of nature. Even in that state he could have no right to kill, to lie, or do any thing else which God in that law had forbidden. Thus, every man would have had an unrestrained right to follow his own will, as far as it was agreeable to the law of nature. And this is, precisely, what ought to be called *natural liberty*.

Though this natural liberty can never be increased by any human institution; because men can never have

power to abolish, or to lessen the obligation of the law of God: yet this liberty may be abridged by human authority; and must be so, wherever society exists. When any number of men set up any form of government among themselves, they must not only fix certain regulations, at the first, according to which they will be governed; but they must likewise establish, in some hand or other, a power of making laws for time to come. Every member of that society must give up his natural liberty, so far, as not only to submit to the fundamental regulations formally agreed to by the whole, but also to the will of those who form the legislature in the society, in all things that are not contrary to the law of nature. But he parts with this portion of his natural liberty, only upon condition of his being so protected by the community, or by those to whose hands the administration is entrusted, that none may have power to lay any restraint upon his will, but what is laid upon him, by the laws of God or of his country. This is what has been called *civil liberty*.

Hence it is manifest, that no man, in the due exercise of reason will ever claim the unrestrained use of natural liberty, in the social state. The will of every individual must be subject to the public will. But if the government is rightly constituted, every one has a sufficient compensation for that portion of his liberty which he gives up, in the protection which he enjoys, under the wings of the law. And no man has ground to complain, while no restraint is laid upon him by the public will, but what is for the general good.

Every one knows that all governments are not alike friendly to liberty. Some allow the subject to retain a

greater share of his natural liberty, and some a less. And that government is always the best, where most of it is suffered to remain, provided the ends of government are gained. This is the very thing, that, above all others, shews the excellence of our government, and constitutes British liberty. We are not only secured against subjection to the will of any man, or any set of men, contrary to law; but the law itself allows us to follow the dictates of our own will in more cases, and lays us under fewer restraints, than the laws of any other country do. A British subject may do with himself, and with all that is his own, just what he pleases, so long as he does no injury to his fellow-subjects, or to the community at large.

It is likewise evident, that it is impossible to frame any government in such a manner, as that all who live under it should be alike free. Supposing a government so perfect as to have every law enacted, that could conduce to the good of the nation, and no more, it is evident, that the man who was most disposed to promote the public good, would always have most liberty; because, in doing what he pleased, he would just do what the law required. On the other hand, if there existed in that nation, an enemy to his country, or one who wished to promote his own interest, by oppressing or injuring his fellow-subjects, that man would live under continual restraint. He would be a slave in the midst of a free nation; because he could never follow his own will, without transgressing the laws. Hence it follows, that, under every good government, the most virtuous man is always most free: and the most wicked will always be under the greatest restraint. No government

can be said to be unfriendly to liberty, because the covetous man is restrained from stealing, or the man of blood from murder. It is the principal end of laws to prevent such men from following the dictates of their depraved will: and when laws cannot do it, they must be restrained by punishments. It is therefore nothing to the disadvantage of any government, to find wicked men complaining of want of liberty under it, while the honest, industrious, virtuous citizen feels himself under no restraint. And this affords no small presumption in favour of our constitution. They among us, who, since the days of *Wilkes and liberty*, have always been most clamorous for more liberty, have been the very persons who stood most in need of the restraints of law.

This observation is peculiarly applicable to those men who are continually harping upon the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS. This branch of civil liberty, as well as every other, however valuable, must have its bounds. If every man was to be allowed to publish what he pleases, without being answerable for it when published, as well might every one be permitted to do what he will, without being answerable for what he does. To every man of common generosity, his reputation is as dear as his life. A public slanderer, therefore, is as dangerous an enemy to society, as an assassin. And to give free toleration to the one is equally pernicious as to grant it to the other. A libel upon the constitution and laws of the country is surely as prejudicial as a libel upon a private character. It is a peculiar happiness of British subjects, that every one is at liberty freely to publish, as well as to speak his sentiments, concerning public measures. This is an advantage to the constitution, and

even to administration; because they have, thereby, an opportunity to avail themselves of the wisdom of individuals, not connected with government. But this liberty may be abused. A man may speak treason, and why may he not print it? And if he who speaks it in a private company may be punished, why should not he who spreads it through the whole nation, by his writings? Men of loyal, peaceable, or even moderate principles, feel themselves under no restraint: and if seditious men are in high dudgeon, because they are not allowed to sow the seeds of rebellion with impunity, it is no more to be wondered at, than a thief's crying out against the gallows.

That *liberty of the press*, which is the acknowledged birth-right of every British subject, does not consist in being allowed to publish what one pleases, without being accountable for it. But "precisely in this, that
 "neither courts of justice, nor any other judges what-
 "ever, are allowed to take any notice of writings in-
 "tended for the press; but are confined to those which
 "are actually published: and in these cases, must pro-
 "ceed by trial by jury*." Or, to use the words of a learned judge, "It consists in laying no previous re-
 "straints upon publications, and not in freedom from
 "censure for criminal matter when published. Every
 "freeman has an undoubted right to lay what senti-
 "ments he pleases before the public: to forbid this is
 "to destroy the freedom of the press: but if he pub-
 "lishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he
 "must take the consequence of his own temerity†." This is all the liberty that even Mr. Erskine pleads for,

* De Lolme, p. 297.

† Blackstone's Com. vol. iv. p. 151, 152.

in his celebrated speech at Mr. Paine's trial. The general principles laid down in that speech, no man in Britain will deny. His application of them to the cause he was defending, every one will excuse; because, as a lawyer, he would consider himself as bound to say whatever he could for his client. But not one word did he say, tending to prove that Mr. Paine deserved no punishment for what he had published. Only he had used his privilege, in publishing what he pleased: and if he had done wrong, was to take the consequence. When I read that speech, I took it for granted, that he would have been hissed at, by all the Friends of Mr. Paine's doctrine, as having deserted the cause: and I dare say, he himself was surprised, as well as many others, at the very different reception they gave him. Indeed, if doctrines as inimical to the constitution and peace of any country, were allowed to be published in that country, with impunity, there would be an end of all government, and of all order. Were Mr. Paine now to publish any thing as inimical to the French convention, and their new-fangled constitution, he would instantly meet with that fate which in his present imprisonment, he has good reason to fear is not very distant.

It is well known, that, from the Union of the two Crowns, till the year 1694, which was six years after the Revolution, nothing was suffered to be published, till it had passed through the hands of a licenser appointed by the court, and had received his *imprimatur*. This was to cramp the liberty of the press. Yet something like this is practised to this day, in most other nations, and even in some republics. Among us now, after a man has published what he thinks fit, without

any to interrupt him, if he comes to be tried for it, it must be by a jury of his countrymen. And that jury are allowed to determine, not only whether he published what he is charged with, or not; but also whether or not it is a libel. The man who desires any liberty to the press beyond this, must have a bad reason for such desire.

There is still another kind of liberty, of which I beg leave to say a word or two. At whatever period of society, a people receives a revelation of the will of God, such as we believe to be contained in the Holy Scriptures, this revelation must tend, in some respect, to restrain men's liberty; because, by it the will of God is made known more perfectly, than by the law of nature: and, as it requires duties which the other did not require, so it prohibits some things as sinful, which the other could not discover to be so. Such a revelation must affect the legislative authority, in every nation where it is received, as well as the subjects. For as no human authority can enact laws inconsistent with the law of nature; so neither can human authority have any right to enact laws contrary to revelation, which proceeds from the same divine source. Every person, therefore, who believes divine revelation, must be freely allowed to do what God requires, and to abstain from what he forbids, without being restrained in these matters, by the will of any man, or of any society. This is what we have been accustomed to call, *religious liberty*.

Divine Revelation is chiefly versant about things that could not have been known without it: and therefore things that cannot properly come under the cognizance

of human laws; which must all be founded on the light and law of nature. Revelation does neither enlarge nor infringe political liberty. It neither extends nor contracts civil authority: it destroys not, but confirms the obligation of civil and municipal laws, unless they are inconsistent with the laws of God. On the other hand, the duties which revelation imposes, unless in as far as they were previously required by the law of nature, are such as could have been enjoined by no human authority: nor can any human authority infringe the liberty of Christians, by requiring other duties of a similar nature. For instance; God has himself determined how, when, and with what he is to be worshipped: and He only had a right to do so. As no human legislature has a right to prohibit that worship which He hath instituted; so, if any human legislator should pretend to enjoin us to worship Him, by ceremonies and services which He has not required, or to employ in his worship certain days and times which he has not appointed to be so employed; the province of God is thereby invaded, and the liberties of his people infringed. Still more guilty should that man be, of whatever civil authority he be lawfully possessed, who should take upon him to increase our liberty, by setting us free from those laws, which God, in the word of revelation has imposed. Nor can any of the powers of this world be guiltless, in pretending to add sanctions to the peculiar laws of revelation, or to enforce obedience to them by civil punishments. This is to suppose, that God's authority is not sufficient to produce obedience to his own laws, or that the punishments, which he has

denounced against the transgressors of them, are not adequate.

By revelation, God has erected a society in the world, which is called the church, essentially different from all societies of human formation. *She* owes her being to a divine institution: *they* depend, for their existence, upon the appointments of men. *They* are erected, for securing to mankind, in this world, such a degree of outward happiness, as their transient and imperfect estate admits of; but *she* is set up, as a nursery for another world, that men may be prepared for perfect happiness, in the eternal state, and safely conducted to it. This spiritual society extends over all the places of the world, where the Christian religion is received: and all who make profession of that religion, together with their children, are members of it. Their being members of it makes no alteration, with respect to their membership in civil society; but lays them under additional obligations to perform the duties of their political stations respectively, whether they be magistrates or subjects, masters, or servants, bondmen, or free. But, under whatever form of civil government her members live, Jesus Christ alone is her King. By Him is her constitution, and form of government appointed: from Him are all her laws and ordinances derived: and by His authority alone they are to be executed. They are enforced, not by civil sanctions, by punishments to be inflicted on men's bodies, or affecting their outward estates; but partly by those wholesome censures, that He has given, for edification and not for destruction; the severest of which is exclusion from her communion; and partly by that final

sentence, which Himself in person will pass upon every man, according as his works shall be.

Of those spiritual rights and liberties, which God, by revelation, has bestowed upon his people, they cannot divest themselves for the sake of society, as they may of their natural liberty: because they are a trust committed to them, for which they must be answerable to the Giver, and without which the proper form and order of the society cannot be maintained. The law of nature itself, from which all natural rights are derived, points out civil government, as the best mean of securing the most valuable of these rights, to individuals, and to society. The same law, which gives us natural liberty and the rights depending on it, and allows us to exercise these rights in person, while we have not the benefit of civil government, requires us to abridge that liberty, and to give up a part of the rights belonging to it, into the hands of civil rulers, for the public good, as soon as such rulers are regularly set up. As for religious liberty, and the rights depending upon it, the same revelation from which they are derived, forbids us to part with any of them: expressly requiring us to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*

The want of a due attention to these differences, between these two sorts of liberty, and the rights depending on them respectively, may lead persons into very gross mistakes. On the one hand, some who have a becoming zeal for religious liberty, and are aware of the necessity of contending for it, may apprehend that natural liberty is equally inviolable; and that they should be equally guilty in giving up any part of it. But it

is impossible that the ends of the law of nature can be gained, in the social state, without every individual giving up a portion of his natural liberty; while the ends of revelation are counteracted, as far as Christian liberty is infringed.—Some, on the other hand, may imagine, that, because religious liberty is as valuable as civil, and civil liberty, when attacked, may be defended by the sword; therefore religious liberty must be defended in the same way. If our civil rights and liberties are in *real* danger, they must be supported by such means and weapons as are in the hands of civil society. But our Christian liberty, and the rights belonging to it are only to be defended by such weapons, as the word of God has furnished us with. If any man take the sword for such a purpose, the King of the church has said, he shall perish by the sword. And equally unwarrantable it is, to make use of any other carnal weapon.

When Satan, like a great red dragon, made war against the saints, by means of the Roman empire in its Pagan state, *they overcame him, only by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony**. Without intermeddling with civil affairs, or making use of any methods, which carnal policy might have dictated, to procure a government more favourable to their religious rights or liberties; they satisfied themselves with using such means as were competent to every one, in his own place and station, to further the spreading of the gospel,—with enjoying, among themselves, in secret when they durst not publicly, those privileges which belonged to them as Christians,—with observing the ordinances of

* Rev. xii. 11.

Christ, and performing the duties which his law required, towards one another, and towards all men. By these, and by a patient bearing of all their sufferings, they contributed more to the maintenance and propagation of their religion, than ever they could have done, by any of those means, that are employed in civil contests. And the men were at length ashamed, who falsely accused their good conversation in Christ.

Upon this principle have Seceders acted hitherto. We could have no occasion for a separation from the church established by law, if we did not thin^k that there is something wrong in that establishment. Against the *ecclesiastical* part of our constitution, we have always borne testimony, as prejudicial to the liberties of Christ's subjects, as well as to the prerogatives of his crown. But, along with this testimony, we have ever satisfied ourselves with practising among ourselves those duties which we think the law of Christ requires; and enjoying those liberties and privileges, that he has bequeathed to us. In this we have met with no interruption from our civil rulers: and we have never thought it necessary to use any other means to bring about reformation. Let us not now provoke administration, and draw down persecution upon our own heads, by attempting to promote the cause of Christ, or the interests of his spiritual kingdom, by such methods as himself never appointed for such a purpose. It is long since the Spirit of God assured us, that ecclesiastical reform must be brought about by other means. *Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord**. When God's time shall come

* Zech. iv. 6.

to pour out this Spirit upon all flesh, according to his promise, the true distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world will be fully and generally known. Both kings and subjects will count it their honour to divest themselves of all that they have usurped from the crown of Christ, and to desist from all oppression of God's heritage: reformation will be brought about without noise or tumult; and the still small voice of the gospel will be of more use for that purpose, than all the clubs, conventions or associations, that ever men can form. Let us associate ourselves, as we have done hitherto, for the purposes of Christian fellowship, and social worship: but I tremble at the thoughts of our attempting to promote the cause of truth, or of Christian liberty, by joining in political associations, to disturb the peace of our country, with men who are as much enemies to our religion, as they are to our political constitution.

Having said this much of liberty, let us now take a view of her bastard sister *Equality*. But here, I am afraid, we have got Proteus by the neck. No person can tell us what this equality is, that some men plead for. If we hunt it down in one shape, it instantly assumes another, and we know not what we are contending about.

If they only mean, that every good subject should enjoy an equal share of civil liberty, an equal protection of law, and an equal security for his person and property, this kind of equality we all admit: and, thanks to kind Providence, we all enjoy it; unless we have forfeited it by our crimes. Am not I as much under the protection

of the law, as the Duke of *Buccleugh* is? Have not I the same security for my small pittance, as he has for his princely estate? If any man injure me, have I not the same recourse to the laws of my country, as he would in a similar case? If his *Grace* himself should ever so far change his disposition or conduct, as to become my oppressor, have I not the same access to a court of justice, and the same prospect of having justice done me, as he would have, if I should trespass against him? It is possible, indeed, that a corrupt judge, influenced by his rank, or his riches, might pass an unjust sentence against me: but it is likewise possible, that a judge of strong feelings, sympathizing with me in the unequal contest, might give a partial decision in my favour; otherwise the law of God had never forbidden to *countenance a poor man in his cause**. And, till there cease to be corruption in human nature, no law, nor government on earth can prevent instances of that kind. But they who have made the trial can witness, that there are fewer such instances in Britain, than under any other government in Europe: or any that ever was in it†. Nor is there any doubt, that my opponent might better afford to bear the expences of the lawsuit, and therefore might find means to protract it till my small finances were exhausted. But in that case I can get upon the poor's roll; and an attestation of this by the Minister of the parish will procure me law for nought. What can human wisdom do more, to set us upon an equal footing, unless there was an equal division of property between him and me?

* Exod. xxiii. 3.

† See De Lolme Ch. xvi. throughout.

Such an equality of property, we are told, they do not plead for: and no man of understanding will plead for it. It may easily be believed, that the leaders of our associations, if they could succeed in their ambitious views, would wish to keep the largest share of the property to themselves. But no person can be ignorant, that many of the deluded people, whom they have prevailed with to join their Societies, and subscribe their papers, look forward to such an Equalization of Property, as one effect of the reform expected: and this prospect is the principal thing that engages them to the cause.

Some tell us, that what they contend for, is an equal eligibility to places of power and trust under government: and this also in a certain sense, we enjoy. The law, indeed, requires certain qualifications, in those who possess such places; but any British subject may enjoy them, upon qualifying himself as the law directs. Seceder as I am, there is no law to prevent his Majesty from appointing me Prime Minister. And if he does, I have it in my choice, either to accept the appointment, and qualify myself for it, by taking the oaths, and the Sacramental Test, as the law directs, or adhere to my principles, and refuse the appointment, because I will not qualify. If the alternative was between sin and suffering, every Christian should know what choice to make: but here there is no suffering on either side. I have only to choose, whether I shall enjoy riches and honour and power, at the expence of my principles, or keep a clear conscience and continue as I am. To be a minister of state is none of the natural and unalienable rights of man: and I am deprived of none of my rights, by being kept from that office.

“ But, though the actual enjoyment of civil offices and places is no man’s right; yet eligibility to such offices is every man’s right, and why should we be deprived of it? ” I shall never stand up to vindicate any law or custom, that lays a man under such disabilities, or prevents his enjoying any office in the state, on account of his religious opinions, provided he is otherwise a good subject. But, the true reason why dissenters lie under such disabilities, is because the legislature does not consider them as being as good subjects, and as friendly to the constitution, as those of the national church. Let us not confirm that prejudice, by taking part in measures of sedition: but let us, by exemplary loyalty, and by supporting the constitution of our country, against all such measures, and against all the abettors of such measures, prove ourselves to be good subjects indeed.

But why should we contend about a phantom? And what else but a phantom is this eligibility? What avails it me, that no law precludes me from an office, for which nature never qualified me, or from which providence has set me at such a distance, that I can never have any reasonable hope of enjoying it? Unless we are influenced by ambition, or some other principle equally sordid, this kind of equality will never be considered by us, as an object worth contending about: much less an object, on account of which we may embroil our country, or involve it in anarchy and confusion.

Our friends must acknowledge, that they who are entrusted with the supreme power, in any nation, must have right to nominate whom they think most proper, to inferior offices under them. And they cannot say, that any man is deprived of his right, because he is passed

by in such nomination. Or will they maintain, that, though no man can be born a king, one may be born a minister of state, a judge, or a general in the army?— They must likewise allow, that laws may be made, without injustice, excluding men, who are acknowledged good subjects, from certain places of power, trust or dignity in the state. Is not a seat in the House of Commons a place of as high trust, as any that the nation has to bestow? Would they think it reasonable that peers, officers of excise, or commissioners of the customs, should be rendered eligible to a seat in that house? Or do they think, that a man's being a Lord, or an excise officer, deprives him of any of the inviolable rights of man?

But perhaps it is an equality of rank and dignity that we wish for. "The French have abolished all titles of honour, and why should not we? Why should one man be called my Lord, and another his Grace, while a better man than either is no more than plain John or Thomas?" But, pray, what would be gained by such equality, unless the gratification of envy? This is no way necessary to republican government: Rome had her senators, her patricians, and her Roman knights. These are the cheapest rewards that any government can bestow, upon those who have distinguished themselves by public usefulness: rewards which will be more valued, by men of generous minds, than pecuniary rewards would be: and, with us, they stand upon such a footing, as can never be hurtful to the commonwealth. We have already seen of what use the House of Lords is, in the British constitution: and what difference there is between our nobility and theirs in France. There was perhaps a necessity for setting the French nobility upon

a new footing, for reducing their number, and abolishing some of their privileges. But the total abolition of all titles of honour was one of the most foolish acts of the French revolutionists, and perhaps one of the most ruinous. Had the people of that kingdom been protected, against the encroachments of the crown, by such a nobility as ours is, their kings had never risen to arbitrary power. And had the throne been surrounded, adorned, and defended, by such a nobility, it had never been in the power of a junto, raised from the dregs of the people, assisted by the *canaille* of Paris, to have assaulted the king in his own house, murdered his guards, thrust himself and his innocent family into prison, and afterwards brought them to the block; for no other crime, but his having exercised that right which was reserved to him by the constitution, which they, as well as he, were sworn to maintain. I know he was charged with attempting to subvert the constitution; but supposing that charge proved, if that was criminal in him, how could they be innocent, when they overturned it at once? Besides, in support of that, or any other charge of real criminality against him, or against his unhappy consort, they produced no evidence, upon which any man of an unbiassed judgment, would have hazarded the life of his dog.

But the most rational account of this equality which is now argued for, is, that it consists in an equality of power, or political influence. The sovereignty, and all the power of the state is radically in the people. This power the people ought to retain in their own hands. And if it were shared by all the people, every individual would be $\frac{1}{1000000}$ part of a King. But, as we shall be

allowed to cut off all women and children, and probably all menial servants, the number of those who have a claim to the rights of man, may be computed at two millions. The sovereignty therefore must be divided into as many shares; and of these every active citizen is to possess one. Doubtless this will be very just, when once we have all government abolished, and ourselves reduced to that state of perfect barbarism, towards which our neighbours are fast verging. But even if this were attained, an important question will arise, whether each shall retain his portion of sovereignty in his own hands, or whether it shall be deputed in the hands of representatives? It is very probable that one part of the sovereign people will be for the one method, and another part for the other. The people in and about London, can meet together at a few hours warning, to the number of two hundred thousand, if they can but find a place large enough to contain the assembly. Thus they can exercise their sovereignty in person: and probably they would choose to do so. But our *sans-cullotes*, in the highlands and islands of Scotland must be content with sending representatives; for it is impossible for them all to attend, as often as an assembly of the people shall be necessary. And who shall decide between their London brethren and them? But the idea of a whole people, gathering from all parts of a country so extensive and so populous as Britain, to deliberate about the making of laws, is so absurd, that it must, of necessity, be laid aside.

If we are agreed, that the sovereignty is to be exercised by representatives, then equality is already destroyed. Each representative is constituted a legislator, he

is invested with as many portions of the sovereignty, as there were active citizens who had a vote in choosing him; while his electors themselves sink into mere subjects. But suppose it is only meant, that every man should have an equal right to elect, and an equal influence in elections: let us see if even this be possible. I go to the place of election, without connections, without dependants, and without any thing to support my opinion, but the honesty of my intentions; for every man may be allowed to suppose *himself* honest. But I have a rich neighbour, who happens to be in the opposite interest. He comes, attended with 500 tenants, and dependants, who all know that he can turn them out from their farms or places, if they do not vote as he does. Where now is the equality between him and me? It cannot exist without an equality of property.

Suppose this likewise obtained. All men come to the place of election upon a level: no one is worth one farthing more than another: and with perfect equality the election is got through. But before the year's end, one man has squandered his allotment of property in riot and dissipation, and another has doubled his by laudable industry. Before a new election, we must have a new division of property. The industrious man is to be robbed of the fruit of his labour; and it must become the reward of him who is a pest to society, that, at the election they may have equal influence. Suppose this new division made; (for what is impossible to a sovereign mob?) the dissipated wretch happens to be a man of abilities, can speak, and knows how to work upon the passions of a multitude: the man of industry is a blunt, honest fellow, who contents himself with

saying *aye* or *no*. The first makes a vehement harangue, in favours of some unworthy candidate of his own kidney, and is followed with huzzas, and acclamations of *Paine for ever*. The other can only say, "Gentlemen, "I vote for such a man, because I know him to be an "honest man, and a friend of his country:" and no body attends to him. The libertine, of consequence, carries the election by a great majority, and the friend of his country is rejected. Thus, to maintain an equality of influence, even in annual elections, we must not only have an annual division of property, we must also bring over dame nature to our scheme, and obtain from her a decree, that all men shall have equal abilities, or, which will be much safer, shall be born dunces. In one word, if we are not satisfied with that sort of equality, which we already enjoy in Britain, I know no other species of it, that can subsist one month, among mankind, while natural talents, acquirements, and accomplishments, are so unequally distributed.

E S S A Y VII.

ON TAXATIONS.

A PRINCIPAL reason why many are dissatisfied with the present government, is drawn from the heavy taxes imposed for its support. No man will deny that our burdens are heavy: and there is no man in the nation who would not wish, if possible, to have them reduced. But before we attack the present system, or wish to overturn it on that account, we would do well to consider the few things following.

It is utterly impossible, that any government can be supported without funds. And, for the support of such a government as ours, the funds must be considerable. We must not only maintain a standing army, proportionable to what is kept on foot by neighbouring states. We must have a fleet sufficient to protect our trade. Our colonies, in different parts of the world must be protected. And the interest of our national debt must be paid. Little more than a century ago, the government of both kingdoms was supported, with few taxations. But then we had no national debt: we had no colonies: we had no standing armies: we had no ships of war. Merchant ships were hired by government, for war, as they now are for transports. Our troops in the time of war, were only raised for a few weeks; and, for the most part, they subsisted themselves. A great proportion of the land, in both countries, belonged to the crown: and its revenues were considerably augmented by wardships, escheats, and other feudal perquisites.

And these, though not levied as our taxes now are, were no less burdensome to the people. The nation thought themselves happy, when they could exchange the one sort of burdens for the other.

It must be acknowledged, that the power of taxation is one branch of the power of legislation: and wherever the legislative authority is lodged, by the constitution of any country, there must the power of imposing taxes be lodged. Accordingly, the scriptures expressly require us to pay tribute, or taxations of whatever kind, to every government, to whose lawful commands, in other things, we are called to be subject. It is perfectly reasonable that it should be so. How can we, who live at a distance from the seat of government, and know but little of its affairs, be as capable to judge of what is necessary for the support of government, as they whom the nation has chosen, to attend to this very thing? And it is our peculiar happiness, that no taxes can be imposed upon us, unless with the consent, and even at the motion, of our representatives.

Heavy as our taxes are, we are far from being as much burdened as our neighbours: even such of them as live under a republican government. To be convinced of this, one needs only look into any approved geographical grammar. In Holland, for instance, their taxes are incomparably heavier than ours: and they fall in a much greater proportion upon the poor. Their taxes upon merchandise are indeed easy; so that their richest merchants pay little more to the state, than the poorest mechanic: hence their flourishing trade. But all the necessaries of life are taxed. A man cannot buy a pound of meat in the shambles, nor a bushel of corn in

the market, that is not subject to a duty. Even their putrid and stagnant water is not free. Every hearth, yea, every human head is taxed. And a certain writer observes with justice, that they have nothing free, but the air they breathe.—In France, besides a heavy land-tax, the *gabelle*, or tax upon salt, was intolerable. Salt being a monopoly in the hands of government, every family was not only obliged to take all the salt they used at an exorbitant price; they were even forced to take a fixed quantity, whether they used it or not. They likewise paid a poll-tax, and a tenth part of all personal estates, and of the income of all employments. This last article alone, would be heavier than all our taxes together. And except the salt-duty, I hear not that any of the rest have been reduced, since the revolution. On the contrary, it was one of the first decrees of the present convention, that all taxes should continue as they were, till the nation was settled. Thus, their republican government, after confiscating, at least, one third of the property of the nation, as belonging to the king, to emigrants, and persons guillotined, and nearly another third, as having belonged to the church, leave the people as much burdened as ever. They who wish to know the state of taxation in Spain, may peruse the book referred to in the margin*. I shall only mention the following particulars. In Madrid, the King receives one third of the rent of every house. Corn, cattle, and all the produce of the earth pays a heavy duty, every time that it is sold, according to its value. And in some places, (for all places in Spain are not taxed alike,) a duty of four per cent. is levied upon all cattle brought into their cities for

* Townsend's journey, particularly, vol. ii. p. 155.—189.

slaughter; and at certain seasons of the year much more. These are only a few examples of the taxes that our neighbours pay. Have we the same reason to complain as they have?

Taxes are not, in reality, so burdensome, as many people are apt to imagine; the longer they are continued, they become the lighter, till they cease to be any burden at all. This may be thought a bold assertion; but it is capable of demonstration. Let the land-tax be an instance. Suppose it fixed, at a real two shillings in the pound, and rendered permanent. In that case, when a man buys an estate, he knows what it must pay to government, he buys it with that burden upon it, and the price is diminished accordingly. It is plain, that if it is worth 27 years purchase with that burden, it would be worth 30 without it. One tenth of every estate really belongs to government: this he does not purchase, but only the nine parts, that belonged to the former proprietor. The same is the case with him that succeeds to it, as his father's heir. He is heir only to the nine parts that were his father's; government is not dead, and therefore continues to inherit it's own tenth part. The only burden, therefore, that lies upon the proprietor of the estate, is that of gathering in the two shillings of yearly rent that belongs to government, along with his own eighteen, and paying it in to the collector of the land-tax. The same may be said of the house-tax, the window-tax, and all others, that affect heritable property.

With regard to duties on merchandise, the case is still more favourable to the trader. Suppose, for instance, the duty on tobacco to be 1s. and 3d. per pound, and that it can be imported from America at 9d. The man who

enters upon that branch of business knows it: and it is the same thing to him, as if he paid 2s. as the importation price; with only the two following differences.—*First*, There is a difference to the nation at large: in regard that five eighths of the money continues in the country, whereas, in the other case, the whole would go to America. *Secondly*, There is a considerable advantage to the trader himself. Suppose a man imports a cargo of a hundred thousand pound weight; he pays for the whole, duty included, ten thousand pounds. He regulates his selling price, so as to make 5 per cent. profit, upon the money laid out, and his clear gain is L. 500. But if the duty was taken off, and he was only to pay the importation price, he would have his whole cargo for L. 3750. And his profit, at the above rate of 5 per cent. would be no more than L. 187 : 10. Thus all the burden lying upon the merchant is only that of being a factor for government, to gather in the duty from his customers, and pay it to the proper officer. And for this factorage, he is paid L. 312 : 10. besides the advantage of having much more money passing through his hands. Every person acquainted with figures, will find the above calculation just; and therefore, the argument conclusive. The same argument will hold, with relation to every tax upon articles of trade or manufacture; unless the tax raises the price so as to lessen the demand.

“ But does not all this fall upon the consumer?
 “ Though the landed gentleman and the merchant do
 “ not feel the burden, the poor labourer does, and the
 “ community at large.”—No doubt, taxations laid upon
 commodities, must fall upon the consumer: but we

should advert, that that consumer is often a foreigner. Many of those goods, that have paid duties to government are exported. Perhaps a drawback is allowed, and, in so far government itself pays the duty. If there is no drawback, the exporter hopes for a profit, at least equal to what he would have made, by selling his goods at home: otherwise he would not give himself the trouble. Wherever he carries his goods, and whoever becomes the purchaser, he is refunded for the duty he paid at home. Thus all the world assists us in paying our taxes: the burden of them falls ultimately upon the people in Turkey, in Russia, in America, and in the East-Indies, as well as upon ourselves. And till we know what proportion of such commodities is exported, it is impossible to compute what share of the burden lies upon the people at home.

Not only does our system of taxation raise the price of those commodities that are taxed; it tends to lower the value of money, and so to raise the price of things that pay no duty, almost in the same proportion with things that do. He that deals in articles not taxed, consumes a part of those things that are. To enable him to purchase these, he advances his price too: and, instead of being a loser, he gains, upon the whole. Even the price of labour is raised, almost in the same proportion with things that pay duty, and the labourer and the mechanic are in better circumstances than if there were no taxes to pay.

The wisdom of our legislature appears in this, that, as far back, at least, as my remembrance carries me, they have imposed few taxes that affect the poor, or those in the lower ranks of life. The produce of the

ground is not taxed: and very few of the necessaries of life. A labouring man, who earns fourteen or fifteen pounds a year; and lays it out upon the maintenance of his family, if they are content to live upon the produce of the country, and to be clad, as their fathers were, in their own manufacture, may live without paying five shillings to government, directly or indirectly, through the year; whereas his income is considerably better than it would have been, if there had been fewer taxes to pay. If people, in any rank of life, will enjoy luxuries, it is reasonable that they pay for them. Thus it appears; that though taxes newly imposed must be burdensome; because they take from the people so much of what was formerly their own; yet the longer they continue, they become the lighter: and, in process of time, they cease to be a burden at all. The people, indeed, have money among their hands that is not their own, and must be paid to government. But they know it: and it is no more hardship to them, than it is to the farmer to pay his rent. Yea, as the farmer expects a profit to himself, proportioned to the rent that he pays; so the people really enjoy a profit upon their industry, in proportion to the taxes they pay.

This reasoning may not be readily comprehended by some: and others will find it so different from what they have been accustomed to hear, that a demonstration itself will not convince them of its justice. But let us appeal to experience. A person who remembers the state of the country fifty years ago, and compares it with the present, will easily perceive, that the increase of taxes, instead of producing a proportionable increase of poverty and wretchedness, has been accompanied with an

increase of wealth, and of its usual concomitants, pride and luxury. The hind or the shepherd now lives better than the farmer did then. And the farmer now keeps a better house than was then kept by the lord of the manor. I well remember the time when sixpence a day, without victuals, was considered as good wages for a labouring man: now, in the same part of the country, a shilling is thought but moderate. If a labourer then paid 5s. a year to government, it is surely easier for him now to pay ten: for still he has double of what he then had to live upon. Meal, which is the principal food of the poor in Scotland, was seldom below 1s. 6d. the stone, at that time; and now it is little more than 2s. And the case is much the same with other things, which are necessary to poor families: so that the man who, in those days, could maintain three persons by his labour, will now maintain four with the same ease, if they are pleased to live now as they did then. It admits not of a doubt, that labouring people, both in town and country, now live in a better house, wear better clothes, feed on a better diet, and spend more in dissipation, than their fathers did at that time. If this is not owing to the increase of taxes; it is, at least, a demonstrative evidence, that these taxes have not made us poorer than we were; and that we are as able to bear them as our fathers were to bear one half of them.

But, supposing our taxations to be as burdensome as they are said to be, no change of government could make them lighter. The revenue of Britain amounts to about fourteen millions yearly. Of these, one goes to the civil list, of which we spoke already, and four to the maintenance of the fleet and army, in time of peace.

No considerable part of this can be saved: And if any person who will take the trouble to read the reports of the commissioners of public accounts, and to consider what Parliament has done in consequence of them, he will be convinced, that œconomy is much more attended to in these matters, than it was some years ago. These five millions would be no burden to the nation, if we had no more to raise. But the other nine millions go all to pay the interest of the national debt. And a diminution of that debt, is the only habile method to diminish the burdens of the people. A scheme for that purpose, perhaps the best that human wisdom could devise, has already been adopted by government: and hitherto its success has more than answered expectation. If it continues to be pursued, as I hope it will, many now alive, may yet see the national debt, immense as it is, paid off. But it must be done gradually; and consequently, we can only be relieved from our burdens by degrees.

It may be objected that "new wars will always increase our debt, more than it will be diminished by the above-mentioned scheme." But it is demonstrated, with perfect certainty, that if the system of an accumulating fund, which the legislature adopted a few years ago, had been adopted at the Revolution, it would have paid the expences of all the wars since, and left the nation without a farthing of debt. It follows, therefore, that at the end of another century, if our wars are not more expensive than those of the last, and the system of the accumulating fund is adhered to, we shall not be more in debt than at present.

It is true, that a parliament, or a convention made

up of fools, atheists, or public robbers, might, with one stroke of a pen, abolish all the national debt, and set the people free from all the taxes which are necessary to pay the interest of it. But malice itself could not devise a measure so ruinous to the nation. A private man who becomes bankrupt, while he is able to pay his debts, is justly considered as one of the worst of villains. And what could the world think of that nation, which should follow his example? Who would ever trust us again, if again we should need to borrow? Or how should we answer to the Judge of all the earth, for such a breach of public faith, such an act of dishonesty and fraud, as the world never yet witnessed, till France shewed them lately the example? Not only would the public creditors, both at home and abroad, be ruined; but all credit would be ruined with them, all property sunk to nothing, and every individual in the nation reduced to beggary. The value of land would be reduced to a mere trifle. A whole estate might be purchased for less than what is now its yearly rent: and none would be found to buy it. Trade and manufactures would cease; for no man would be able to carry them on, because none would have confidence to trust another. Tradesmen and labourers would neither have work nor wages. One private bank, in a remote corner of Scotland (at Air) failed a few years ago, and how many, in different parts of Britain, were ruined by that means? A few private houses have failed, since the month of April 1793, and how many have felt the shock? The South Sea scheme is not yet forgotten: but though all the property that ever belonged to the South Sea company, had been sunk in the pacific ocean, what was that to the sinking

of almost three hundred millions, now in the British funds? Though the whole island were swallowed up by the sea, and all the inhabitants cast naked upon the deserts of America, it would scarcely prove a greater calamity.

Nothing can be more reasonable, than that all who enjoy the protection of government, should contribute, according to their ability, for its support. And the benefits that we derive from the British government, are more than a compensation for all the taxes we pay. Are we not indebted to government, for the preservation and security of all that we possess; and all that we hold dear in the world? Our persons, our wives, our children, our liberty, and all our property, if it were not for the interference of government, would soon become a prey to the lawless and disobedient; and probably some of those men, who are now most diligent in telling us, that we are oppressed by government, a thing that we should never have suspected, if they had not told us, would then become our plunderers, and oppressors indeed. The time is not yet distant, when in many parts of our country, we were obliged to pay contributions to public robbers, who lived by spoil and rapine, for the safety of what they were pleased to leave us. And shall we think it an hardship, to pay, at least, an equal proportion, for the support of that government, under whose wings we dwell safely, every one in quiet possession of his paternal inheritance, or of the fruits of his own industry; or to express it in the language of the prophet, *we dwell, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none to make us afraid?*

E S S A Y VIII.

On the PRESENT WAR, and the STAGNATION
of CREDIT, as connected with it.

EVERY man who has either the reason or the feelings of humanity, will be convinced, without arguments, that war is a bad thing: and ought to be avoided, as long as it can be avoided, without incurring a greater evil. Every Christian, in Britain, or in Europe, will earnestly desire a speedy termination of the present war, and pray for it. He will even look forward, with ardent longing, and with a lively hope, to that blessed period, when nation will no more lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But it must be allowed, both by Christians and others, that there are some cases, when war is both lawful and necessary. And after all the outcry that is made against the present war, and all the scurrilous abuse that has been poured out upon Government, for engaging in it, and for continuing it, I am persuaded, that if ever Britain, since she became one nation, was engaged in any war, that could be justified, upon the principles of justice, of policy, of religion, or even of necessity, the present is that war.

This war was necessary, to maintain inviolate the public faith, and fulfil those treaties, by which the nation has been bound, for almost two centuries back. It has long been known to all Europe, that by the treaty of 1609, whereby the Dutch were set free from the

yoke of Spanish despotism, and acknowledged an independent state, the navigation of the Scheldt and the Meuse, was given up to them. And this treaty was guaranteed, both by France and England. It is as well known, though it has not been known so long, that the French convention, on the 21st of Nov. 1792, sent an order to their general, enjoining him, to take every measure, for opening a free navigation of the Scheldt and the Meuse: and that this order was executed, to the utmost of their power. If France, because she changed her government, thought herself free from those engagements, by which the nation had so long been bound, surely that was no sufficient reason, why Britain should violate her faith in the same manner. If the treaties of nations are not binding, individuals may likewise violate their obligations, as soon as they have it in their power: and then the foundations of all social intercourse are dissolved. Our patriots acknowledge, that by this measure, the trade of Amsterdam would have been ruined; "but," say they, "the merchants of Amsterdam would have removed to Antwerp, and their trade would have followed them." This is just as if the convention should also take possession of the navigation of the Thames; and then tell us, "We do you no injury: to be sure we ruin the trade of London; but what of that? Your merchants have only to come over to Paris, and there they may find that trade, which they can no longer carry on in their own country."

"But that antiquated treaty was inconsistent with the rights of man, and therefore, is not to be regarded. Are not all rivers free? Has not every nation, and every person an equal right to the element of wa-

“ter, to use and occupy it as he pleases?” Perhaps it may appear so by the new philosophy; but mankind, hitherto, has never thought so: nor has the practice of nations been ever conformable to that doctrine. Rivers, while they continue within the territories of any state, have ever been considered as belonging to that state, and subject to that authority by which it is governed, as much as the land on either side of them. Yea, ask any private gentleman, through whose estate a river flows, and he will tell you, that he considers the fishing on that river, and every other advantage that can be derived from it, as his property, in the same manner as the adjacent fields, unless barred by a previous contract. How would Britain take it, if the convention should tell her, that they have the same right as she has, to the navigation of the Forth or the Thames? Will the French allow to Holland an equal right with themselves, to navigate the Seine and the Loire? Are not narrow seas, as well as rivers, considered as subject to those states, whose dominions lie on both sides of them? Does not the king of Denmark levy a toll on all ships that pass the Sound? Have ever any of the nations of Europe demanded it as their right, that the Turks should open the navigation of the Straits of the Dardanelles? And was it not after a long and bloody struggle, that Russia obtained a share in the navigation of the Black Sea? Why then should not the people of Holland have the same right to the navigation of their own rivers? And if Britain has engaged to defend that right, how could she see it invaded, and sit still?

“But,” say they, “the Dutch were not asking our protection in that cause: and surely it was soon

“ enough, to enter into a war on their account, when
 “ they applied to us for that purpose.” And, pray, who
 told you that they did not apply? Are all the secret ne-
 gociations of the courts and cabinets of Europe to be
 found in the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*? Supposing that they
 did not apply to us, that was no sufficient reason why
 we should not have given them assistance. Should I,
 in passing through the streets, come up to a puny repub-
 lican, of four feet high, engaged with some brawny aris-
 tocrat, who held him by the throat with the one hand,
 and was ready to knock out his brains with the other;
 would it be my duty to pass on, without attempting to
 rescue him, on pretence that he did not call out to me for
 assistance? Should I do so, he would probably never
 call out more. This was precisely the case, between
 France and Holland. The Dutch, taken by surprise,
 and in a state of confusion among themselves, knew that
 they were no match for France. They protested against
 the invasion of their rights: but they durst do no more,
 till they had a prospect of some effectual assistance. And
 if Britain had not stepped in to her relief, it is probable,
 that Holland had been an 86th department of France,
 before she could have made a formal demand of the sti-
 pulated assistance.

The war was proper, and necessary, to preserve the
 balance of power in Europe. Was it ever considered
 as unwarrantable, for King William or Queen Anne,
 to make war upon France, with a view to restrain the
 ambition of Lewis XIV. and put a stop to the conquests
 he projected? And was it not as dangerous to Europe,
 for a French convention to acquire universal dominion,
 as if it had been a French monarch? They said, indeed,

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they meant not conquest, but fraternity. But was not their fraternization a real conquest, whatever name they gave it? Would not France have received a greater accession of strength, by the fraternization of the Austrian Netherlands, had it continued, than she would if Lewis had conquered them? Were they not of more use to France, when enjoying the privileges of native citizens, than they would have been, if kept under by force, as a conquered people? Had the convention any better right to make them citizens by an armed force, than Lewis had to make them his subjects? Or had Britain, or the other allied powers, less reason to prevent France from becoming a too powerful neighbour, because, instead of being enslaved by one tyrant, she was ridden by a whole convention?

Our own safety required that Britain should engage in the present war. I shall say little of the danger, to which we were exposed, through the attempts of French emissaries, to pervert the minds of the British people, and to excite them to subvert the government. That such attempts were made has been denied; and from the nature of the thing, it must be difficult to prove it: though, I believe, never any person denied it, but such as were, either directly or indirectly, under their influence. Neither shall I say much of those congratulatory addresses, that were sent to the French convention, by clubs or societies, in London, Rochester, Dundee, and other parts of Britain, or the presents of cannon, and other military implements, that were made them; because no cognizance has ever been taken of these things by any court of justice: though, I have no doubt, that if such things had happened in some former periods, the authors of them would have been subjected to the penalties of a

*premunire**. But the reception given to these addresses in France, was a clear evidence, that they wished, and even expected the fraternization of British subjects, as well as of our allies on the continent. Nor shall I insist upon Dumourier's declaration, that after over-running Holland, he would dine in London by a certain day. That was only the raving of a man, whose brain was turned by a temporary success. But all these things, taken together, afford, at least, a strong presumption, that Britain had reason to arm in her own defence.

But we have much stronger evidence of this, than all these afford. Did not the French convention, on the 19th of November 1792, adopt a decree, by which they declared, "in the name of the French nation, that they
" will grant fraternity and assistance to all those people,
" who wish to procure liberty?" And what was this, but that they would assist all discontented persons, to throw off subjection to the governments under which they lived, in every nation; and particularly in Britain, where they well knew how many had been rendered discontented, by the scandalous writings of some of themselves? Was not the decree proposed by *Cambon*, adopted by the convention, and sent to their generals by extraordinary couriers, Dec. 15th, 1792, a plain declaration of war, against all kings, and against all people who should submit to them, or so much as negotiate with them? Their words are, "The French nation declares, that it will consider as enemies, all those people, who
" refusing liberty, shall enter into accommodation, or
" negociation with their tyrants." And we know, that,

* The legislature have, at length, found it necessary to put a stop to these practices, by the traitorous correspondence bill.

with them, as well as with their friends among ourselves, kings and tyrants are synonymous terms. Had Britain stood aloof, and suffered them to go on, as they were doing at that time, what must have been the consequence? They had picked a quarrel with Holland, though she had no king, about the navigation of her rivers. As soon as that had been settled to their mind, they would have had a similar quarrel with Britain, about the navigation of the open seas; for they say, that, by the navigation act, Britain has tyrannized over France, ever since it was made. And their addressers in Britain would have made them very welcome; perhaps it would not have been long, when they would have sent them an invitation, to come over and deliver us from a hereditary monarch, that cost the nation a million annually, and to establish among us that sort of liberty and equality which now subsists among themselves.

“ Yes,” say our democrats, “ That was the true
 “ cause of the war. The court of Britain, and all the
 “ courts of Europe, were afraid, that if the French
 “ should succeed, all the people of Europe would have
 “ followed their example: liberty and equality would
 “ have triumphed every where, and kings and tyranny
 “ would have become extinct.” Yes, say we again,
 and, though there had been no other cause for it, the
 war is just and necessary. The extinction of kings is
 the destruction of the British constitution: and French
 liberty and equality include anarchy, despotism, mas-
 sacre, atheism, and every abomination. To prevent the
 entry of these among us, and to preserve our constitu-
 tion, I trust Britons will ever consider as a sufficient cause,
 for going to war with all the world.

Sympathy for the French themselves called aloud upon Britain to enter into the war. All Europe saw, that the whole French nation, from the king to the meanest peasant, had embraced the constitution of 1791. All whose eyes were not blinded with prejudice saw, that the Jacobin Club, and the commune of Paris soon became weary of that constitution, and were determined upon the extinction of royalty. Whatever they or their convention say to the contrary, every impartial person knows, that this was the true spring of the horrors of the 20th of June, the 10th of August, and the 3d of September*. When the national assembly prudently dissolved themselves, and called a general convention, Europe saw with astonishment, men chosen into that convention, from the dregs of the people, of the most infamous characters, the most depraved morals, and the most abandoned principles. We saw these men adopting the views of the mob, and of the Jacobines, overturning the constitution by the roots, murdering their king, confiscating the property of their fellow-subjects, and dooming them to perish by martial law, for no other crime, but flying their country to save their life. We have seen them abolishing Christianity; giving their sanction to polygamy, adultery, and incest; destroying all true liberty, all security for life or property, and all law but their own will; and butchering almost one half of their own number, without ever a person being chosen to fill up the places which have so become vacant. We have seen revolutions following upon revolutions, massacres upon massacres, and France turned into a common shambles for the

* See Moore's journal during a residence in France, lately published.

human species. All this while, no man durst open a mouth, or breathe a whisper, against the ruling party. But can it be supposed that a whole nation is so far infatuated as to approve of such measures? It is manifest that they do not: as appears from the frequent insurrections, and pretended plots against the republic. Is it fit that Britain, or any generous nation, should sit still, and not lend her assistance, to deliver that people, from the infernal clutches of such a band of robbers?

“ But what has Britain to do with the internal government of France? Has not that nation the same right as any other, to regulate their own government; and to give it what form they please?” A people who have no government among them, have, no doubt, a right to set up what form of government they please: and it must be confessed, that France is very nearly in that condition. But how shall the French people choose a form of government for themselves, in their present distracted state? The last thing that could be called the deed of that nation, was the acceptance of the constitution of 1791. A hereditary limited monarchy was the government that the nation then chose. That choice Britain made no objections to. She continued her connections with France, from the first revolution to the 10th of August 1792, without ever taking notice of her change of government, or any of her internal transactions. But the government of France was totally overturned, on that day of horrors, by an armed mob from the suburbs of Paris. And every thing has been managed, since that day, by the influence of that mob, and according to the will of their leaders. Till the voice of the nation can be heard, Britain, and all the rest of the

world, have a right to consider the constitution of 1791, as a standing deed: and in attempting to restore such a monarchy as was settled by that deed, Britain is only supporting the choice of that nation against a savage banditti, by whom the nation are kept in cruel bondage. The court of Britain always disclaimed any intention of meddling with the internal affairs of France, and continues to disclaim it. In the king's speech, at the opening of the Parliament, Dec. 13th 1792, he says, "I have uniformly abstained from any interference, with respect to the internal affairs of France." And in his late declaration he still expresses the same sentiments. In Lord Hood's negotiations with the inhabitants of Toulon, no mention is made, on either side, of restoring absolute monarchy. They express their unanimous wish "to adopt a monarchic government, as it was originally, by the constituent assembly of 1789." And upon that condition his Lordship takes them under the protection of Britain. Durst he have done so, if he had not known, that it would be agreeable to his master? Or has ever the court found fault with him on that account? Britain, I hope, will not lay down her arms, till some sort of government is established in France, in which she can confide, and with which she can treat, in some hope that public faith will be kept. In treating with the present convention she can have no such hope. When that convention met, the *Girondist* party prevailed, and *Danton* and his *Mountain* were held in contempt. Now this last faction is the whole convention; the other have all either suffered by the guillotine, or are now in prison, waiting their turn of that useful instrument. Were a treaty now concluded with the con-

vention, another faction may rise up, Danton, Robespierre, and Legendre may likewise expiate their crimes on a scaffold, all that they have done may be disclaimed, and Britain may be forced to arm herself anew*. But, that ever our court intended, to restore absolute monarchy, or by force to oblige France to receive any form of government whatever, no impartial man will believe.

But, abstracting from all this, Britain was laid under an absolute necessity of entering into the present war, in order to repel the hostilities of the French, and defend herself against their attacks. Britain took no part in the campaign of 1792. Nor had she any fixed purpose of entering into the dispute, till the convention forced her to it, by an actual declaration of war, both against Britain and Holland, and an embargo laid upon all our ships in their ports, on the 1st of Feb. 1793. All this was accompanied with a most insolent attempt, to detach the people of Britain from the government, and excite them to take their part against it: in that they declared themselves in a state of war, not with the British nation, but with the king of *England*, and the *Stadtholder of the United Provinces*. Would the friends of the people really have wished Britain to sit still, and see her ships taken, her trade ruined, her country invaded, her government subverted, one half of her subjects fraternized, that is, made subjects of France, and the other half proscribed, without taking any measures to prevent it? Surely if administration had taken such a course, they would have deserved all the execrations, with which our pseudo-patriots load them.

* Since the above was written, Danton also has suffered by the guillotine.

" But, though France was first in declaring war, Britain was the real aggressor: as we had for some time before pursued measures hostile to France, and plainly shewed our intention of making war upon her." So speak our democrats: and they mention chiefly three things, as indicating such an intention. 1st, The recalling of our ambassador after the 10th of August. But our ambassador was sent to the court of France, as standing upon the constitution of 1791. On that fatal day, the government of France was dissolved: and the ambassador's commission expired of course. The king might have sent him new credentials, but to whom? The national assembly had seasonably dissolved themselves. The present convention was called, not for the purpose of administration, nor yet properly for legislation, but merely to settle the form of government, and give to France a new constitution; so that, excepting that, all that they have done has been mere usurpation. To whom, then, should Britain have sent an ambassador, since Lord Gower's recall? 2d, Britain's refusing to acknowledge, or to treat with their ambassador, is mentioned as another act of hostility. But the same reasons that justify the former step, serve also to justify this. If we could not send an ambassador to them, surely neither could we receive one from them. Yet, though he was not received in a public character, he was suffered to remain in London, till the shocking news arrived of the king's murder. His papers were received: and answers were given into his hand, in which Britain made known her demands, and the terms on which she was willing to continue in peace, even with the convention. And all the answer we received was the above declara-

tion of war. 3d, The Alien Bill has been represented as an act of hostility, which France had ground to resent. But, in that case, all other nations had the same provocation; for no hardship was laid upon French citizens, more than upon other foreigners. It was the opinion of some of our best lawyers, that such an act was needless; because, without it, administration had power to have done all that it enacted. Indeed, it would seem, that foreigners were subjected to little more hardship by that act, than British subjects are liable to by existing laws. I am no Frenchman; but I suspect, that if I should appear in London, or even in Edinburgh, and not be able to give an account of myself, or of the business upon which I came, I would be liable to be punished as a vagrant. It will not be denied, that the reason of passing that act, was the danger to which the nation was exposed, from the attempts of French emissaries, to spread seditious principles, and to excite seditious practices, among the people. And I know it has been said, that this danger was imaginary, and no such attempts were made. But, if it was so, why should the convention, or their friends in Britain, have resented the measure? For they were only persons of the above description, that could suffer any hardship by it; unless it was a hardship to tell who they were, and whence they came.

How it came to be asserted, that this war was undertaken by the combined powers, in support of the Popish religion, I cannot understand; unless it be, that the leaders of the faction hope, by that means, to engage on their side, some zealous Protestants, who would otherwise have taken no part in the cause. All the world must know, that religion has never been mentioned in the

quarrel. And if it had, all the world sees, that it is not *Papery*, but *Christianity*, to which the convention have declared themselves enemies.

As to what they say, about putting an end to the war, and withdrawing our troops, now that the invasions of the French are repelled, and they driven back into their own country, it scarcely deserves an answer. If any farmer in the country should find his neighbour's cattle among a field of his corn, which they had completely destroyed, would he content himself with driving them over the march, and go home and leave them there without a keeper? Would he not expect both some reparation for the damage, and some security that they would not come back? The application is obvious. If the combined armies were withdrawn, a month would not pass, when the French armies would be back where they were this time last year†. Did ever our friends hear of any war, that was deserted in that manner, or was ended any otherwise than by a treaty of peace? And what nation, that has any regard, either to her dignity or her credit, will enter into any treaty with a band of murderers?

What is thought the strongest objection against the present war, is drawn from its supposed influence upon credit in the nation; and the stagnation of trade and manufactures, that it is said to have occasioned. It must be allowed that every war must affect trade: as it must raise the price of insurance, and oblige trading ships to wait for convoys. Nor will it be denied that the present war may have contributed something to the sudden

† A certain proof of this we have in the present state of Flanders, July 5th, 1794.

stock sustained by credit and by trade in this country since its commencement. Since the establishment of the commercial treaty with France, a number of our merchants and manufacturers have had large commissions from that country. When the war broke out, such demands ceased of course: they wanted their money for what they had sent over, and probably will never recover it. But many of our remittances from France were in goods. And we might have goods from them, that were not paid for, at the commencement of the war, as well as they had from us. No man, that knows any thing of the extent of our trade, can believe, that such a shock as credit has sustained, could ever have proceeded from a total stoppage of all the intercourse that ever we had with France. And evidence may be produced, sufficient to satisfy any unbiassed mind, that the failures which have taken place among us, were not owing, in any great degree, to the war; but to other causes, which, in a very short time, would have produced the same effect, though we had continued to enjoy profound peace. My reasons for thinking so are the following.

1st, A committee appointed by the House of Commons, to enquire into the causes of these failures, gave this as the result of their inquiries. This committee was not all taken from one side of the house: there were among them members in the opposition, as well as members in the interest of government. Some of them were men as much acquainted with matters of trade, as any in the nation. And they doubtless had means of information, that no private person can have. Much credit, therefore, must be due to their report, on that head.

2d, Such failures were not confined to Britain; but took place, to an equal extent, in other countries, that had no concern in the war. Did we not hear of one house in Warsaw, that failed for no less a sum than three millions sterling, about the same time when our own failures began? And Poland, at that time, had neither war nor disturbance, nor any prospect of either. Were there not likewise capital failures in Venice, Genoa, and other trading places? And every person concerned in trade can tell, that he knows as little whom to trust, among his correspondents abroad, as among those at home. How could *our* going to war produce such effects among all the nations of Europe?

3d, Our failures took place, and that almost to the whole extent, before it was possible that credit could be affected by the war. Before the American war commenced, our trade with that country was much more extensive than ever our trade with France has been: and an immediate stop was put to it, by their non-importation agreements. The American war hurt our trade more than any other war ever did. But the effects of it were scarcely felt, till the year 1779, four years after it began; when France and Spain had joined the confederacy against us. Last year, the failures began within ten days after the war was resolved upon. If our trade supported itself during four years of the most disastrous war that ever Britain saw, how can any man believe that it could have suffered so much by this war, within a few months, during which we had nothing but a train of unexampled success?

4th, The war with France continues: nor is there any more appearance of its coming to an end, than there

was when it first commenced. Yet the country is already beginning to recover from the shock it sustained. Credit begins to be re-established: trade revives apace: many of the hands, that had been discharged by manufacturers in different places, are again employed: our staple commodities, particularly wool and cattle, are rising in their prices: and there is reason to hope, that, in a little time, our situation, in this respect, will be equal to what it was before. Now, is it probable, that this should be the case while the war continues, if the war had been the sole cause of the failures; or if it had any considerable influence upon them?

There is all reason to think, that the true cause of most of these failures, was the very flourishing state of our manufactures and trade. Multitudes, in that line, stretched themselves beyond their capital, in hopes of growing suddenly rich. When demands came to be made upon them, that they did not expect, they could not answer them. They were therefore under the necessity of giving up their affairs, into the hands of their creditors. Their goods were, of course, sold below value, and their creditors were losers; though perhaps, if time had been allowed them, they might have satisfied all demands, and had a considerable surplus. People in trade were connected with one another: one failure produced two or three more; and so on, till our papers were filled with bankruptcies. Trade and manufactures were at a stand: not because there was no demand, but because confidence was gone, and no man knew whom he might trust. But, as soon as things come to settle, and it is known who may be depended on, trade and manufactures, and public confidence, will

be restored to their former state, whether the war continues or not. And every one will, at length, be convinced, that the war was no principal cause of the stagnation.

It is almost unnecessary to mention the malicious insinuation of some, that these failures were purposely brought about by government, partly by means of the war, and partly by the bank of England's refusing to discount bills; in order to break the spirit of the people; and prevent their making those efforts in the cause of liberty, that they otherwise would have done. Is it credible that government would have first ruined credit of purpose, and then given five millions to support it? I will not say, that the whole was a manœuvre of those in opposition to government; who, by an unnecessary run upon private banking houses, brought about those failures of purpose, that they might bring an odium upon the war, and upon the measures of government. Though the one assertion would be quite as probable as the other.

Since the war was to take place, and likewise the stagnation of trade, it was a happy circumstance, both for government and for the country, that they took place at one and the same time. On the one hand, if the manufactures had been in a flourishing state, and all hands employed, government would have found no small difficulty in procuring the necessary recruits for the war. On the other hand, had the stagnation of trade happened in the time of peace, multitudes of people, that had been employed in the manufactures, when deprived of work, would have wanted the means of subsistence, and either

must have starved, or become an useless burden on the country. Now many of these have an opportunity of enjoying the means of life, and of being useful to their country by enlisting in the army. Thus has the providence of God made the one of these evils an antidote against the other.

It is likewise urged against the present war, that it is impossible it can be successful. 'The French,' we are told, 'possess incredible resources. They have plenty of money: all their men, from 16 to 60 years of age, are in a state of requisition, trained to arms, ready to join their forces, and filled with enthusiasm in the cause. The Combined Powers have as yet made very little progress in France: and it will never be in their power to subdue 25 millions of people.' What the success of this, or any other war may be, must depend upon the sovereign disposals of the *Lord of Hosts*; and can neither be foreseen nor predicted by men.—But if we judge by human probability, the Combined Powers have no reason to despair of success. Of the 25 millions of people, of whom France boasted, not one fourth could ever be, at one time, capable to bear arms. Of these, how many have perished, within these two years, by the war, by massacres, and by the guillotine? How many are in a state of banishment, and taking part with the Allies? And how many would willingly take part against the Convention, if they durst? Money indeed has not yet failed them; but it is drawn from pillage and confiscation, the plunder of private property, and the ruin of every real source of public wealth. This fund of rapine, great as it is, will soon be exhausted; and where

will they find a new supply?—Their expences, if accounts from themselves may be credited, amount to 12 millions sterling per month, or 144 millions in one year. Surely all the property that they have left in France will not long supply them at that rate.

It is true, they can raise multitudes of men, by *forcing* all that are able to bear arms to be *volunteers* in the cause. But the Combined Powers can likewise arm the Peasantry in their respective countries, if reduced to that necessity: Some of them have already begun to do so; and surely there are not more men in France, than in all those countries together. If all their men were employed in the war, who will cultivate the ground? And who will fabricate their clothes and implements of war? A famine must necessarily ensue: and their armies, as well as the women and children left at home, must perish for want. How far they are already verging towards this condition, themselves best know. But if it is not so, in a very considerable degree, the world is much deceived.

If we may judge of future success by what is past, we have still good reason to hope. Since Britain entered into the war, the Conventionists have been driven out of Holland and Flanders; the allied armies have penetrated into France, and taken a number of their fortified places. We have destroyed their naval force in the Mediterranean, and taken the whole Island of Corsica, except Calvi, which, if not taken, is now closely besieged. We have taken all that they possessed in the East-Indies; and all their West-India Islands. In these successes Britain has had a principal share, and Britain is like to reap the principal advantage; as all their possessions in the East and West Indies, have been subdued by our arms, and are in

our possession*. Some of the allied armies have, now and then, received a check: and when was there ever a war, where the success was all on one side? But, for sundry centuries back, there has been no instance of equal success in so short a time.

If our success had been less, that is no reason why we should desert the cause. Events must be left to an all-governing Providence; and we all know that Divine Providence often permits wicked men to have success in sin. Neither is that party always successful in the issue, that had most success in the beginning of a war. The children of Benjamin were successful in two battles, against all the other tribes of Israel; and in the third, they were almost exterminated†. And every one versed in the British History knows, that, in most of our contests with France, France was successful in the beginning, though, in the issue, Britain was triumphant. It is not by the prospect of success, but by the justice of the cause, that our judgment should be formed. And when the conduct and complexion of the present rulers of France are considered, rather than Britain should enter into any treaty or alliance with them, every true friend of order, of justice, of religion, or of his country, would wish to have war with them, as *Israel* had with *Amalek*, *from generation to generation*.

* To all this may now be added the memorable victory obtained at sea by Lord Howe, on the first day of June, 1794; when six of their ships of the line were taken, and one, if not more, destroyed.

† Judges, chap. xi.

CONCLUSION.

THE above Essays were written in the months of December 1793, and January 1794. The delay of their publication has been owing to various circumstances, in which the Public are not interested. The changes that have taken place both at home and abroad may have diminished the force, or perhaps obscured the meaning of some expressions, which contained an allusion to the state of affairs at that time. But nothing has happened tending to invalidate any part of the reasoning; on the contrary every new occurrence has served to confirm it.

Though the punishments inflicted upon some of the ringleaders of sedition, ought to have awed their abettors into quietness, and seemed for a time to have done so; it now appears, that they have only served to render them more daring; and their machinations, though more secretly carried on, have become more dangerous than ever. The discoveries lately made by government are not yet so public, as to warrant a discussion of them in this place; but, from what is universally known, the following things are as manifest as noon-day, *1st*, That our British Conventiionists did not mean to seek reform in any Constitutional way; but their Reform, whatever it was, must have been accomplished by force. *2^{dly}*, That what they aimed at was not merely a Reform of the House of Commons, but a total subversion of the Constitution; by substituting a Convention in place of all the three

branches of the Legislature; and vesting in it the whole power of the nation, both Legislative and Executive. In a word, it was, to have Britain reduced to the same condition with France. 3dly, That they did not mean to attempt the execution of their infernal plan, by a manly and open declaration of war against their Country, or against the ruling Powers, but by a sudden insurrection, and massacre of all whom they considered as hostile to their designs, or capable of opposing them with effect. Of this we have a sufficient proof, in the form of the weapons with which they had begun to provide themselves. They were so constructed that a person might conceal them, in his bosom, or in his pocket, till the moment when they were to be used. And had not Providence brought to light their plot, it is more than probable, that the friends of good order and government, might have been murdered in the streets, or in their own houses, before they had suspected any danger. *Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth.*

It will not surprise any one, and I trust it will convince very few, that these intentions are still disclaimed by that party, and even denied by some in parliament, who, though they now disclaim membership in these societies, have never appeared great enemies to their measures. But it is curious to observe how those men have always denied that any thing dangerous to the constitution was intended by these societies: and now, when incontrovertible evidence of the fact is laid before parliament, they attempt to turn all into ridicule, by saying that nothing is now discovered, but what was known six months ago. If *they* knew six months ago, of the treasonable practices, which are now come to light, how can they be answer-

able to their own consciences, to God, or to their country, for concealing them so long?

It is equally curious to hear them arguing that, because the severities hitherto used have not been sufficient to restrain such practices, therefore no further severities ought to be used; but government should now try what lenity and forbearance will do. Is not this the same, as if a man who is council for a criminal, before a court of justice, should deliver himself in the following manner? "All the rigour of the laws made against robbery and murder, and all the severity exercised, in the execution of these laws, have never yet been able to prevent the commission of those crimes. Instead, therefore, of a more vigorous execution of the laws, the proper method for abolishing such crimes, will be to disannul all laws against them, to suffer criminals to enjoy impunity, and to give an universal toleration to murder and robbery." Men who argue in this manner are surely reduced to their last shift.

FRIENDS, COUNTRYMEN, AND FELLOW CHRISTIANS,

Permit me, as a true friend of the people, a lover of the peace and order of society, a servant and ambassador of the Prince of peace, to address you in the words of truth and soberness. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; nor suffer yourselves to be imposed upon by the good words, and fair speeches of men that lie in wait to deceive.* The political constitution, under which you have the happiness to live, is the best that human wisdom ever yet devised. The privileges that you enjoy, under its protection, are such as no other nation under heaven possesses. The evils to which you are subject are

common to mankind every where: no government can prevent them. While men continue to be sinners, and while a just and holy God is the supreme Judge of all the earth, it will never be possible to set mortals free from those miseries which sin brings along with it. You may change one misery for another: or, by struggling against them, you may render your miseries more heavy; but never, in this world, can you hope for exemption from the common evils of life. But why should these be imputed to the government under which you live? We may appeal to you, in behalf of government, as Samuel did to the people of Israel in his own behalf: Whose ox, or whose ass have they taken? whom have they defrauded? whom have they oppressed? Can you soberly lay your hand on your heart, and say, that you have suffered any thing, in your person, in your property, in your liberty, or in your just rights, by their hands?

The specious names of liberty, equality, and the rights of men, are employed, by designing men, to seduce you into practices subversive of all liberty, and of the most valuable rights both of God and man. Divine Providence has now pulled off the mask, by which your seducers attempted to cover their designs; and it is plain that they aim at nothing less than the total subversion of the British constitution; and the introduction of a republican government, upon the model of that (if government it can be called,) which now subsists in France. But if that could be effected without bloodshed, and with the free concurrence of the whole nation, the whole nation would soon repent of the change. A mere republican government, in a great nation, must necessarily be the government of a few demagogues; who, having both the

legislative and executive power in their hands, can be subject to no controul; but the liberty and the property of every person in the nation, must be subject to their arbitrary disposal.

But you will be satisfied, that the great body of the nation are against this change; and if ever the schemes of our pretended reformers are executed, it must be through a deluge of blood, and after the most violent convulsions, through all the horrors of civil war, and those new horrors which France has invented. We also must have our revolutionary tribunals, our massacres, and our guillotines. Our land must be uncultivated; our trade and manufactures must cease; and pinching famine will consume the few whom the sword could not destroy. Can you think of imbruing your hands in the blood of your friends or brothers, of your fathers, or your own children? Can you lead those to the scaffold, with whom you once joined sweet counsel as you went to the house of God in companies? All this you must resolve on, if you will adhere to these desperate men, and join in the prosecution of their schemes. You have no alternative left, unless to be yourselves put to death for refusing to go all lengths with them.

That political enthusiasm, by which the minds of some are influenced, may perhaps carry them through all this: they may outbrave the justice of their country; they might also meet death with a confidence worthy of a better cause; but that enthusiasm will carry them no further. It has been clearly proved, that seditious and treasonable practices are as contrary to the law of God, as they are to the laws of men. And after suffering all the punishments human laws can inflict, they must an-

swer for the same crimes before the dread tribunal of God. There, the films of prejudice will fall from their eyes; their bastard courage will forsake them; and their own conscience will ratify the just sentence, which the Judge of all the earth will pronounce against them. If they die glorying in their crimes, they must die impenitent; and there is no place for repentance in the other world. *Seditions* are enumerated, by the Spirit of God, among the works of the flesh*. *Traitors*, are in the black list of those sinners, whose appearance in the world shall make the last days perilous†. And *murderers* shall infallibly have their part in that lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.

If in the great day of final reckoning, you shall be found to have been guilty of any of these crimes, and to have died without repentance, all the world shall not be able to hide you *from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, nor to screen you from the wrath of the Lamb.*

Permit me, therefore, to intreat, to beseech, and even to conjure you, as you love the peace of society, the safety of your families, or the preservation of your own lives; as you desire the prosperity of the church, or the glory of him who purchased her with his own blood; as you wish to escape the just judgment of God, and to enjoy the approbation of the great Master at his coming; as you value those immortal souls, which if they be lost the gain of a whole world will profit you nothing; that you suffer not yourselves to be seduced into practices which must prove ruinous to all these. If you have already been seduced, count it your glory to break your fetters, and return to the way of duty; and, for the time

* Gal. v. 20.

† 2 Tim. iii. 4.

to come, instead of hearkening to those filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities, give a practical attention to the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, and quietly submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors, as unto them who are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, for so is the will of God. If your will is obstinately set in opposition to his will in this respect, think not that ever you can harden yourself against him and prosper; for he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. If you will persist in evil courses, to the disturbance of the public peace, that same power, which would otherwise be the minister of God to you for good, shall prove the instrument of divine vengeance against you; for he beareth not the sword in vain.

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